Smithsonian

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Eerie shapes tower over BLM wilds in New Mexico (p. 30)

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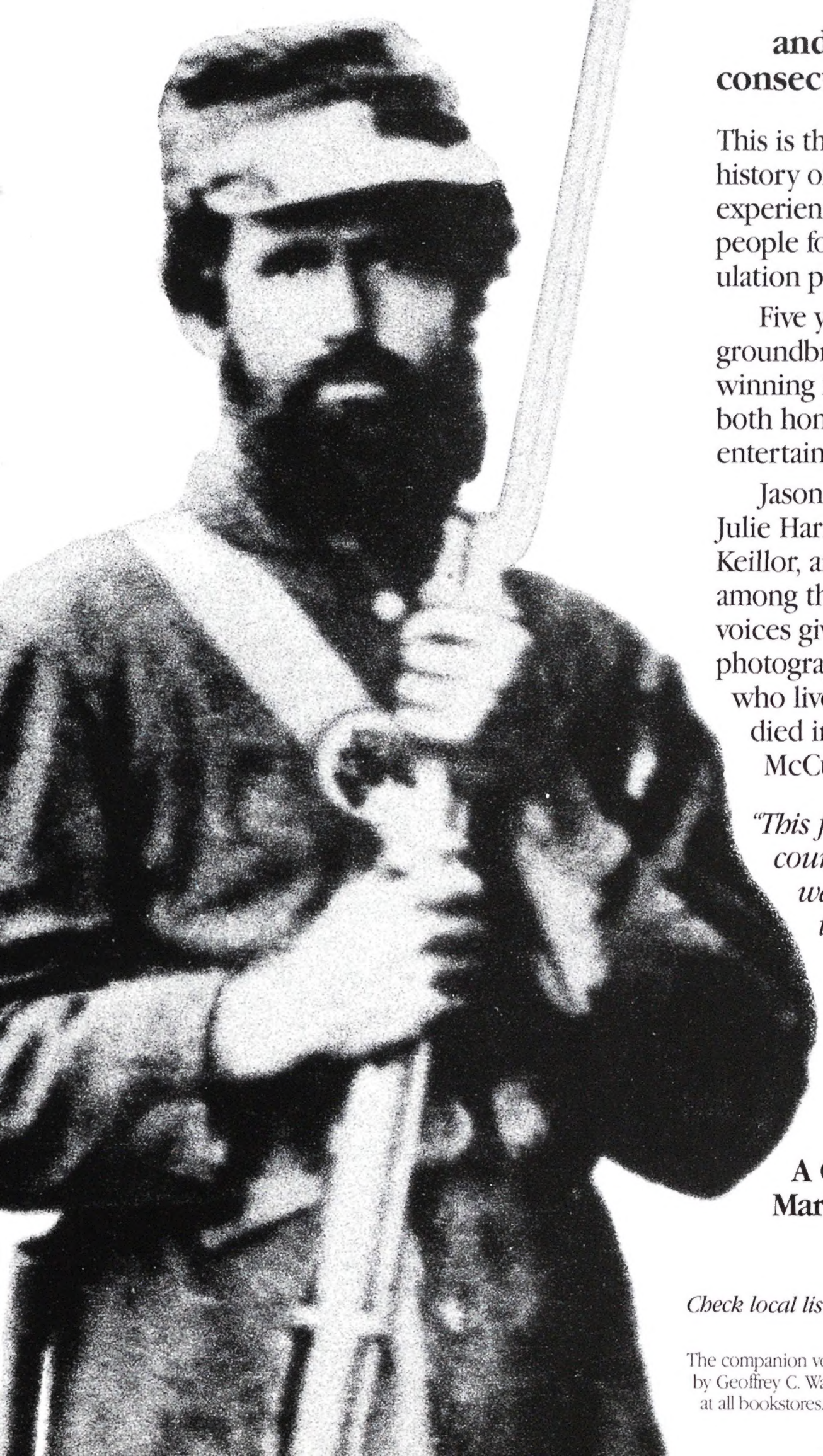

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The companion volume, THE CIVIL WAR, An Illustrated History, by Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns, and Ken Burns is available at all bookstores. Published by Knopf.

September 1990

Smithsonian

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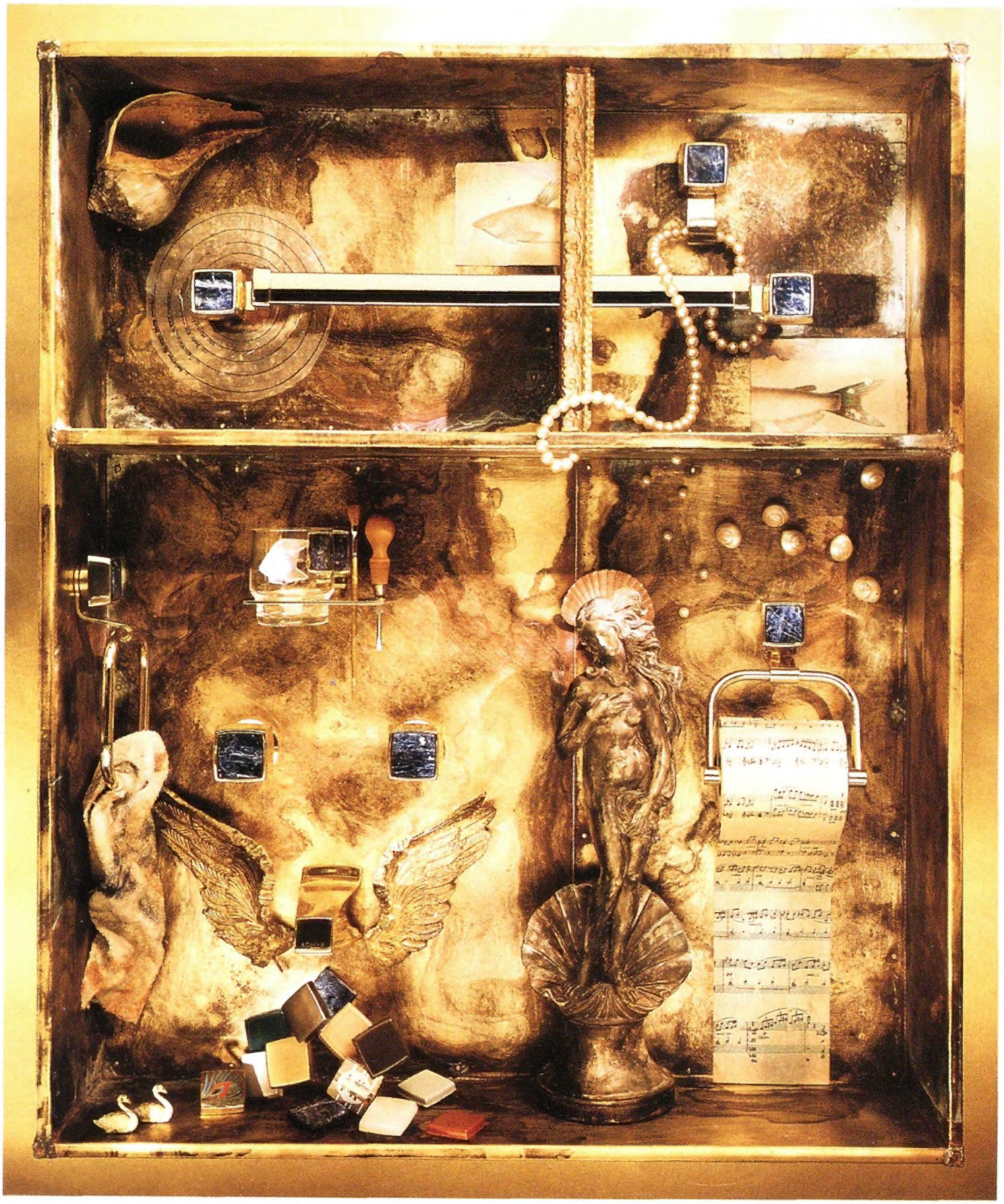

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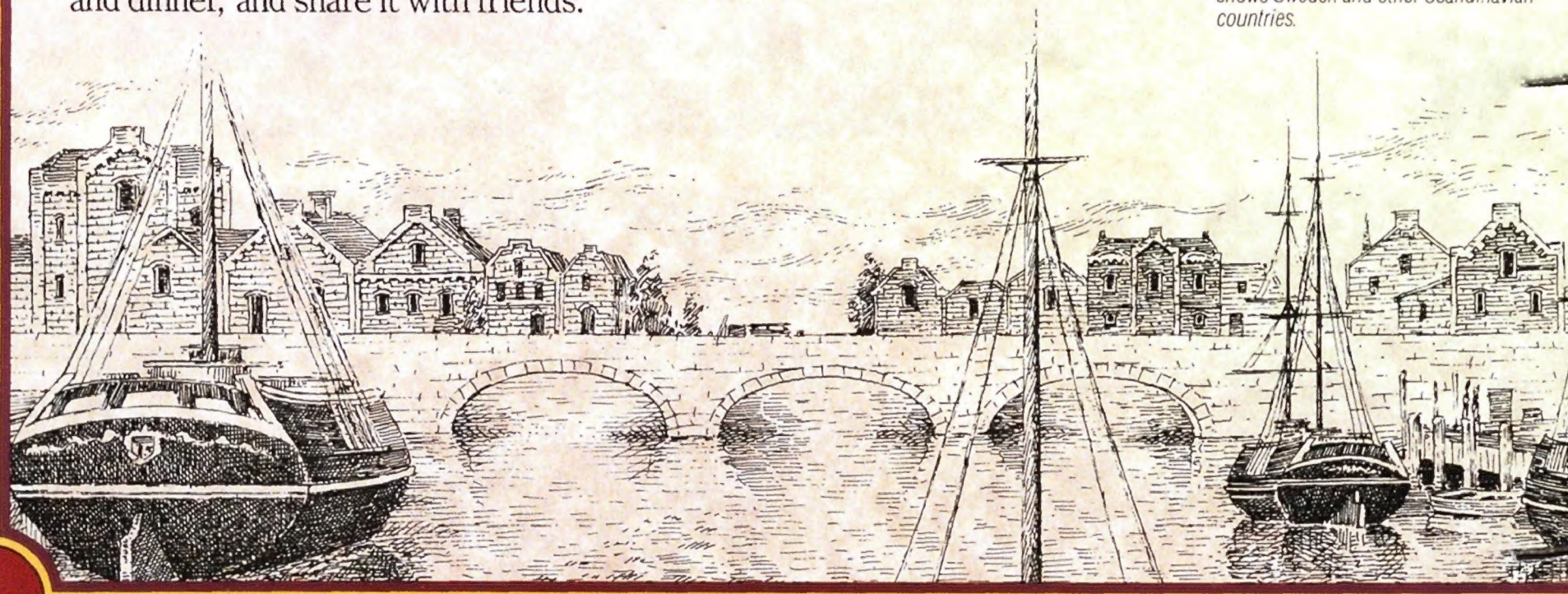

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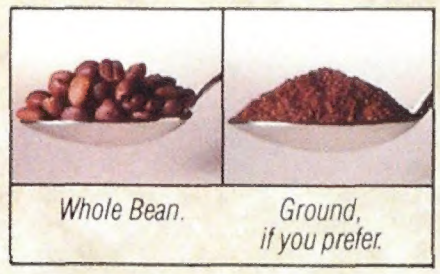

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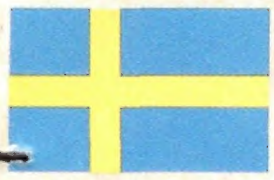

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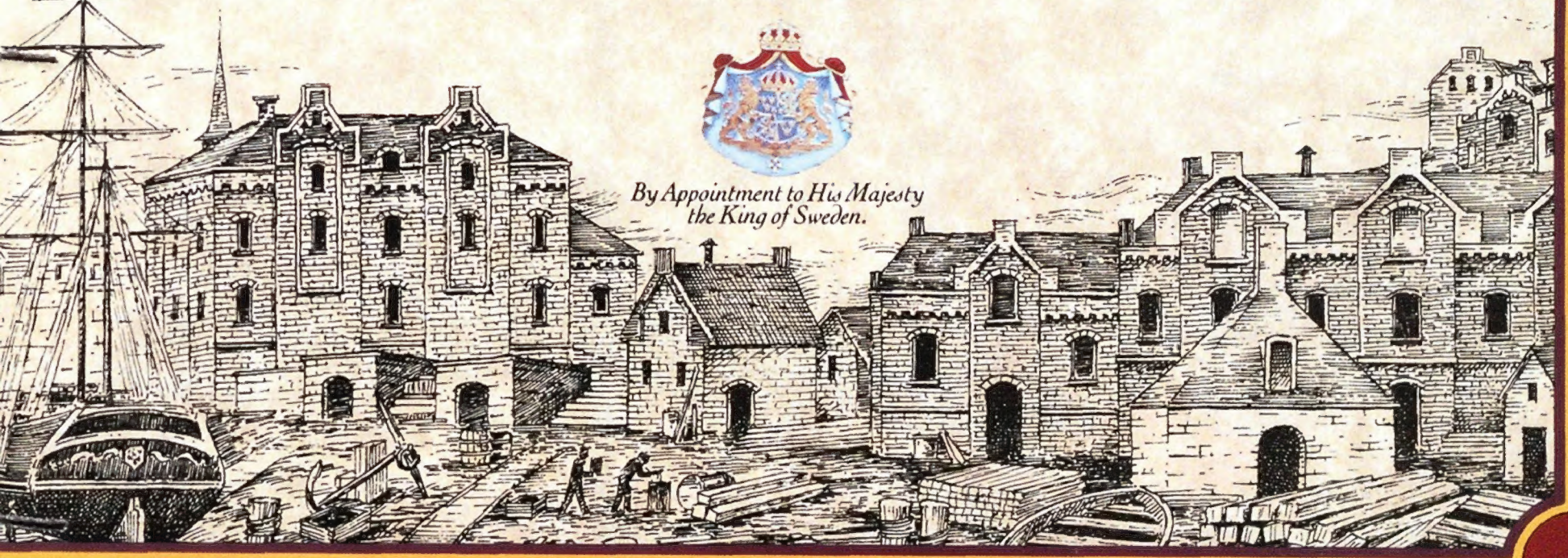

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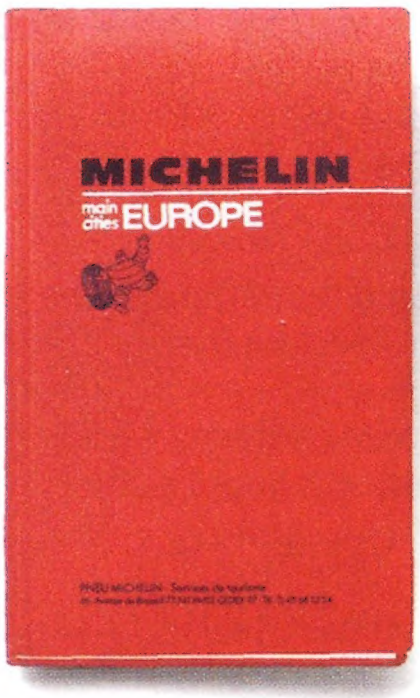

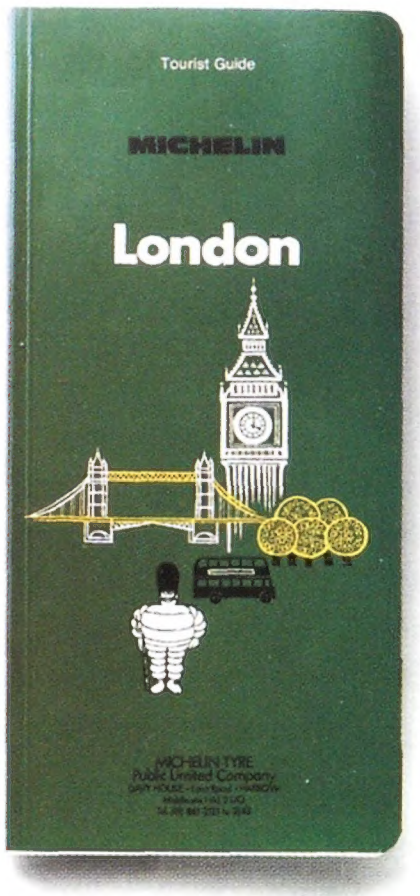

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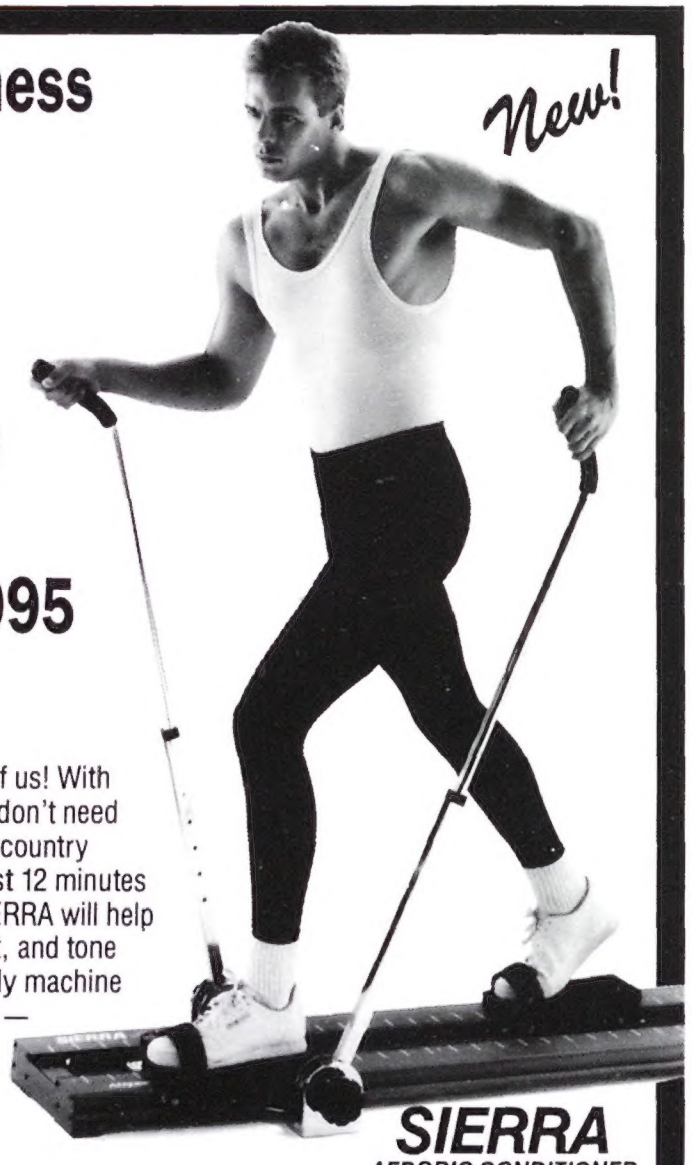

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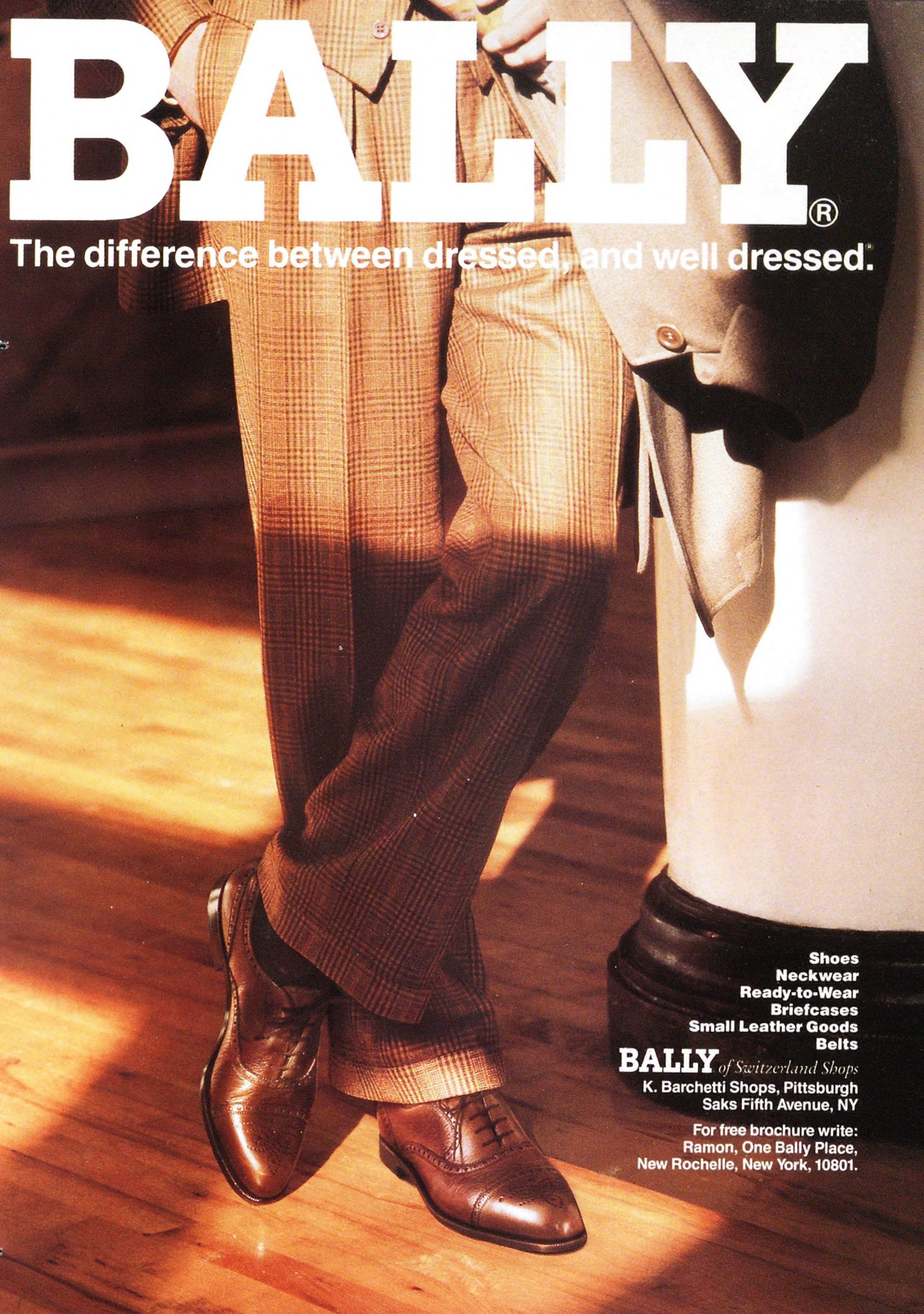
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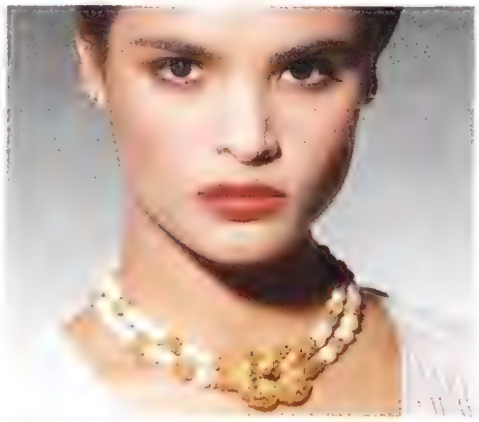

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Smithsonian horizons

A recent conference in Japan gives rise to some reflections on urban problems everywhere in the world

Earlier this summer I had occasion to participate in an international symposium in Japan devoted to converging urban and environmental concerns as we enter a new era—before very long, a new century—of increasingly global interdependence and interaction. Held in connection with a brilliant exposition of gardens in Osaka, it provoked some fairly pessimistic reflections on trends currently affecting not only U.S. cities but those in much of the world.

Cities have historically sheltered and stimulated much of the intellectual and cultural diversity that give meaning to civilization. But they are also, and increasingly, focal points for crime and other social disorders; principal generators of pollution and the waste products that are threatening to overwhelm our landfills and waterways; active fault-zones of interethnic tension; and, in general, dissipaters rather than creators of wealth. How have things come to this pass? What, if anything, would help to restore their traditional leadership?

Architecture critic Paul Goldberger argues that cities may well be cultural necessities, places symbolizing our shared sense of community as well as our diversity, and yet that we do not really need them the way we used to:

> In an age of freedom of movement and even easier freedom of communication, an age of computers and fax machines and cellular telephones, I am not sure anybody has to be anywhere, particularly not downtown. And many people choose not to be, for the simple reason that being in a city is not, in the end, easier.

This access to alternatives is not open to all, of course, and the dispersal into the suburbs is largely limited to those who are wealthier and better educated.

But there is also a concurrent dispersal of manufacturing that is wider and in some respects still more unsettling. Enhanced competition, whether from automation, declining economies of scale or wide differences in labor costs, is leading to a disappearance of concentrated, large-scale industrial facilities as the traditionally sustaining source of employment in our urban centers. As John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch point out in *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987):

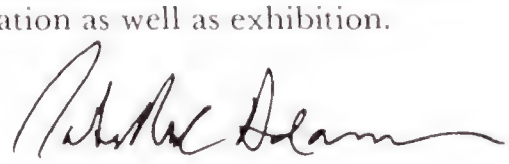
> In the new order, the products themselves are being made outside the rich countries; the dichotomy between the raw material and finished product no longer defines what people in various countries do. The domicile of the coordinating firm . . . also becomes a matter of ambiguity. . . . Capital becomes difficult to trap because it dissolves, moves, redefines its internal relations, transforms itself into something else. Unlike the experience for people, "homelessness" serves capital well.

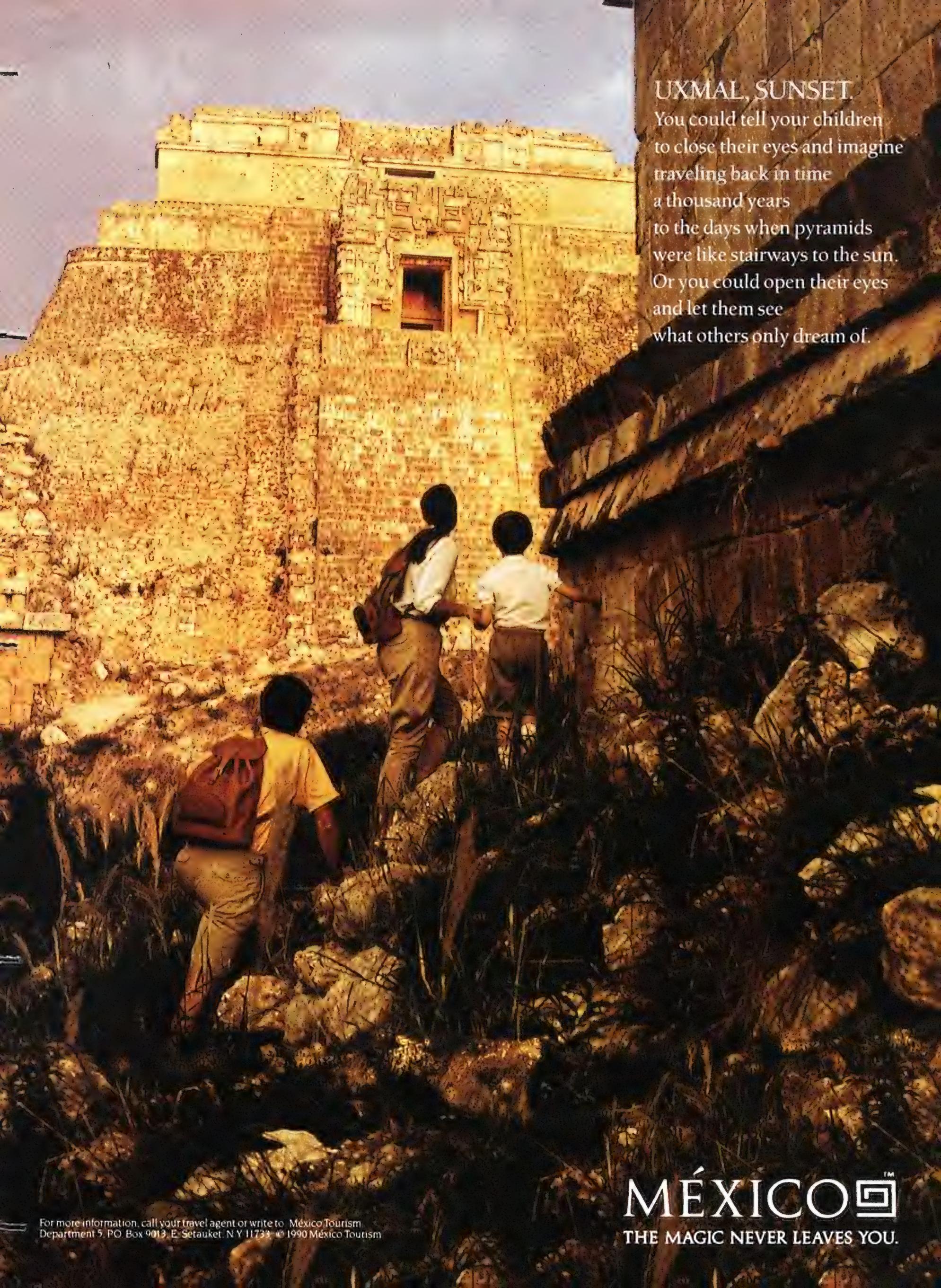
All this typically produces rising urban unemployment. The widespread shift from a manufacturing to a service economy similarly involves downward mobility for many. As tax bases shrink, a deterioration of the whole urban infrastructure follows. Meanwhile, the growing mismatch between required job skills and the levels of preparation provided by our educational system places urban schools in the vortex of an even more rapidly approaching crisis. While not everything is as bleak as this suggests—Pittsburgh and Baltimore come to mind as counterexamples of apparently successful urban reinvigoration—our prevailing trends are undeniably negative.

A more significant counterexample may be Japan itself. It has urban ills aplenty, principally extreme congestion and the unrealistically spiraling cost of urban housing, to which no effective solutions have yet been introduced. Its distributional and retail systems contrast sharply with the image we hold of Japanese high-tech efficiency. Resistance to enabling tax increases is fully as strong as what we are experiencing. Officials in its ministries and urban prefectures laughingly deny that they have any less difficulty than we do with reconciling the entrenched cross-purposes of developers, regulatory agencies and the vagaries of political processes. Yet they somehow find the means and will to plan comprehensively for an expansive, prosperous future for their cities, over the long term, and not to resign themselves to the same macroeconomic forces that we in the United States face as if these were an inescapably constraining framework.

It is an open question as to whether Japan's trade surplus and our corresponding deficit substantially explain this difference in capacity to meet our respective urban challenges. Both might instead be reflections of the underlying difference in our savings rates, or of some other feature affecting our current economic, technological or cultural vitality. These are questions that our respective governments have addressed at length over the past year.

Whatever the answers, the importance of learning more about each other at all levels has increased. And specifically for the Smithsonian, all of this strongly encourages us to continue intensifying the rewarding networks of joint activities and mutually supportive relations, such as exchange of personnel, that have already been established in many fields of scientific research and in museum conservation as well as exhibition.

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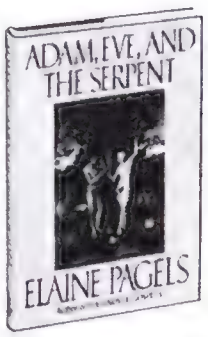

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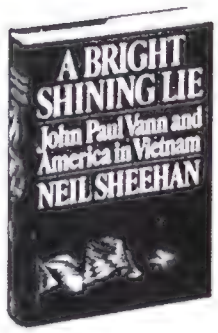

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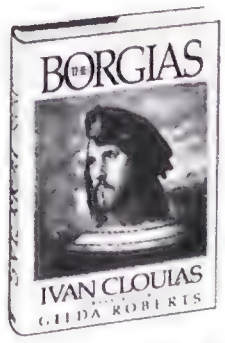

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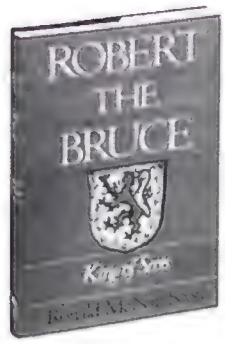
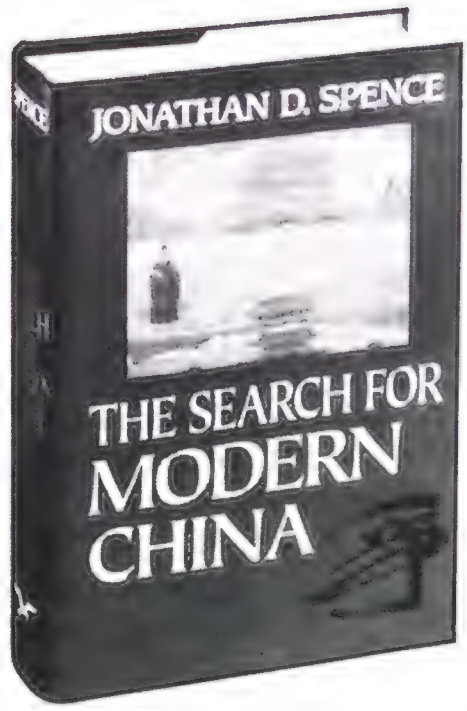


3467. Pub. price $24



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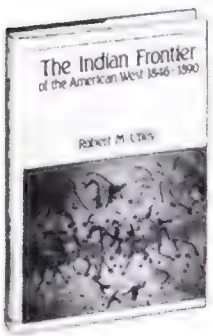

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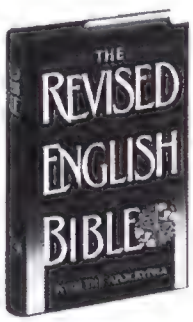
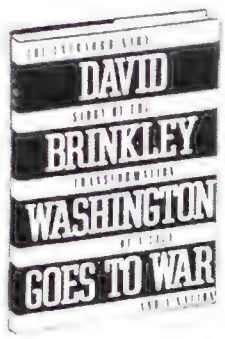
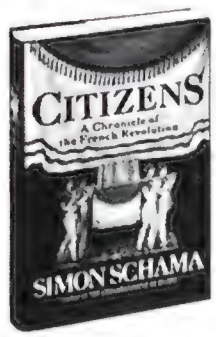


3947. Pub. price $21.95

1792. Pub. price $22.95



6130. Pub. price $18.95



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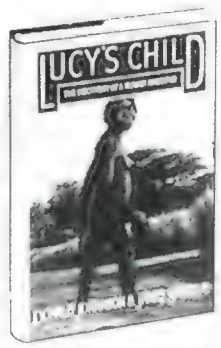

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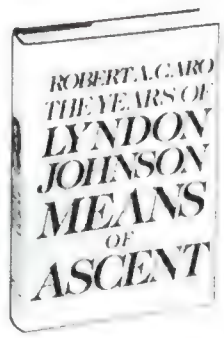

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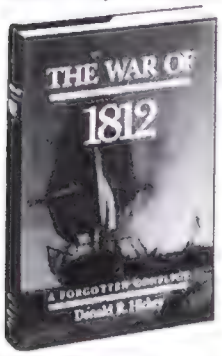

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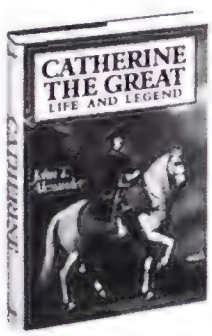

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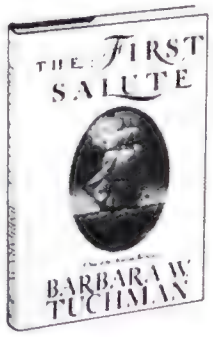

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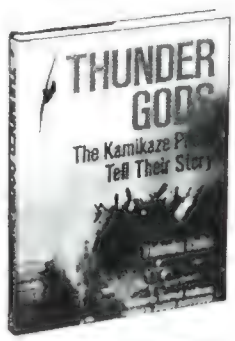

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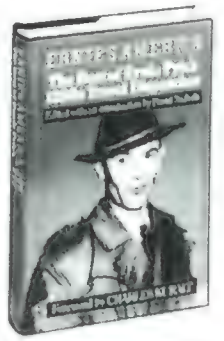

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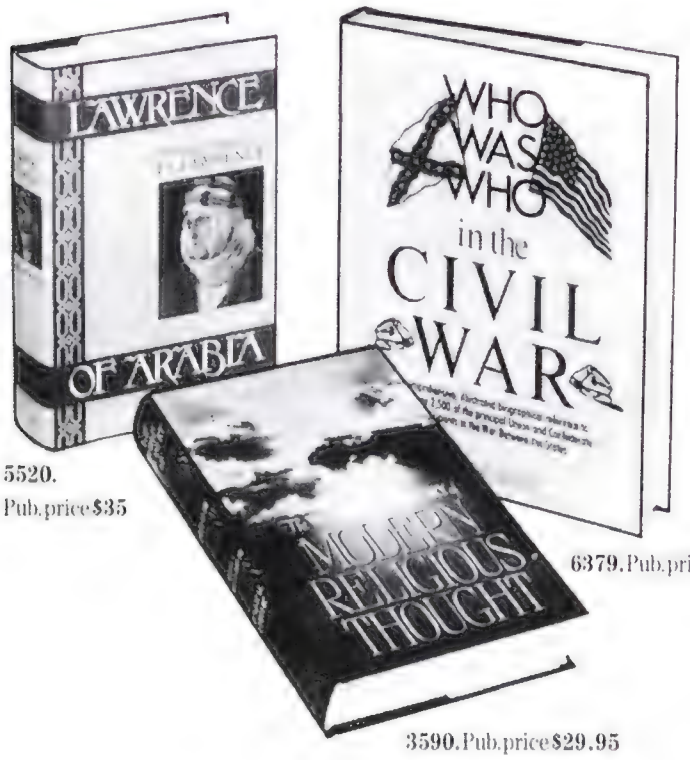

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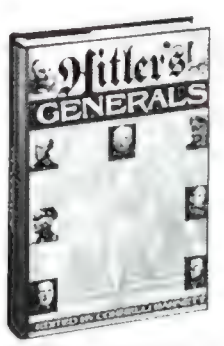

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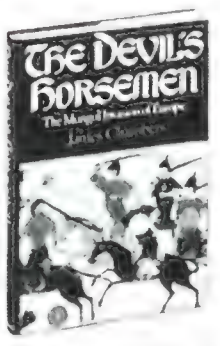

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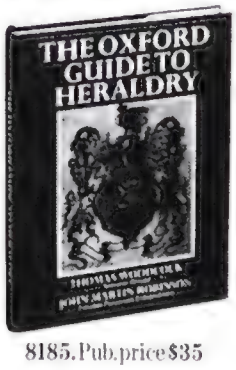

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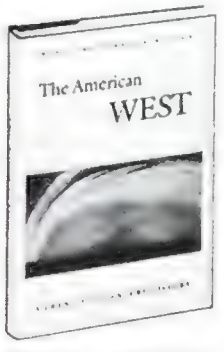

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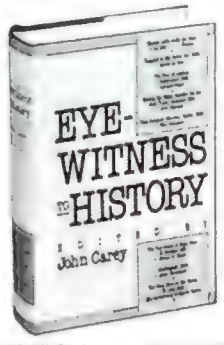

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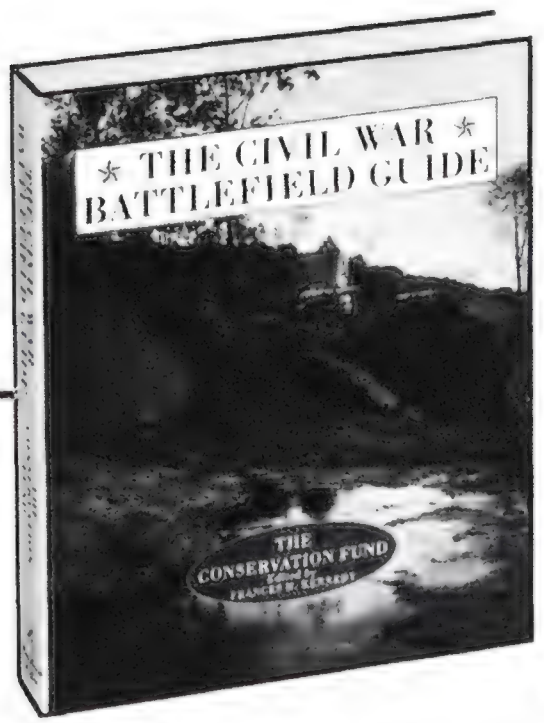

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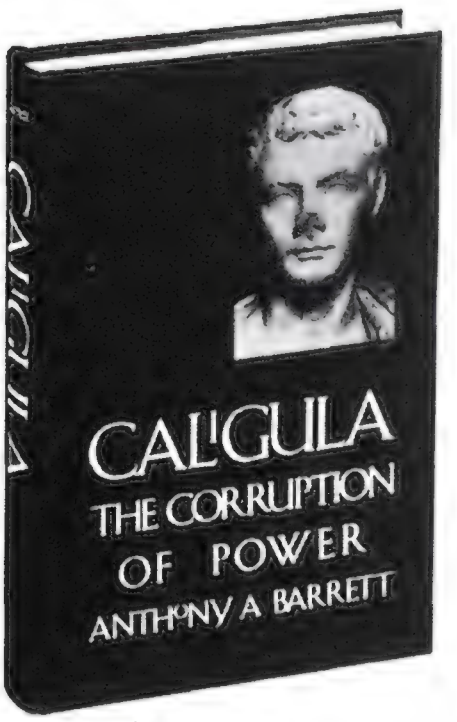

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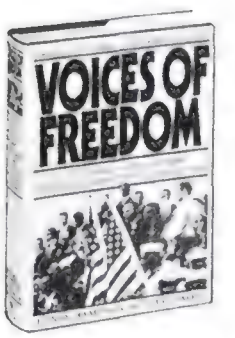

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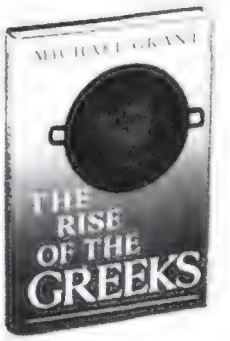

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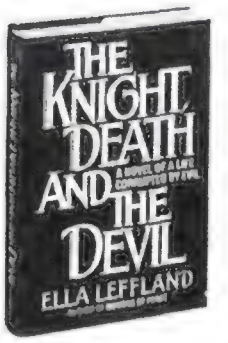

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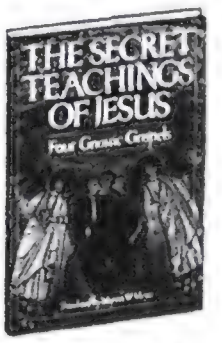

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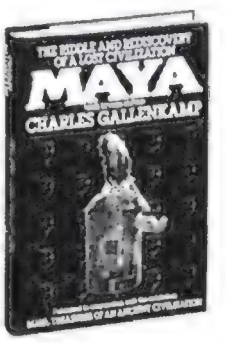

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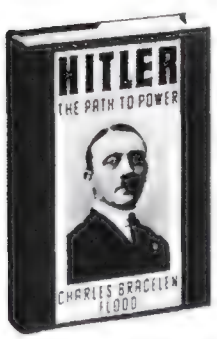

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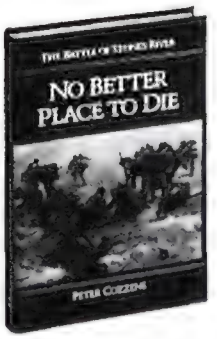

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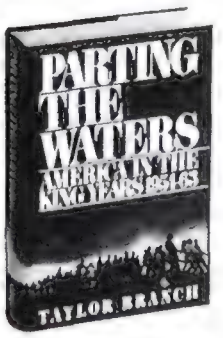

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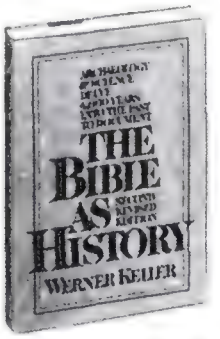

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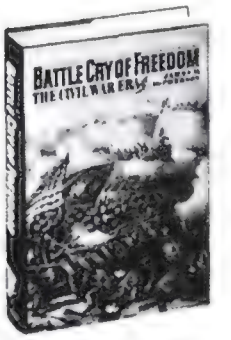

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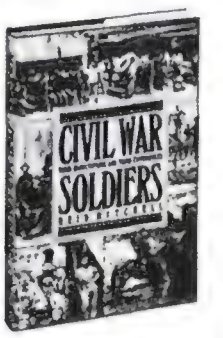

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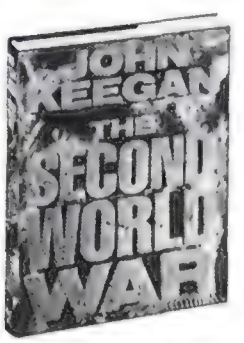

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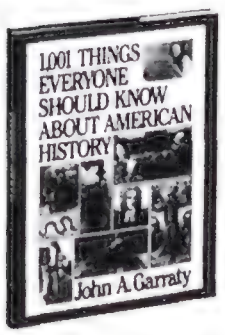

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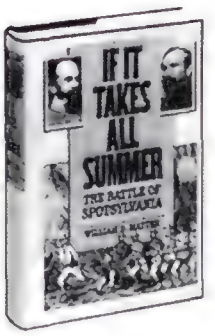

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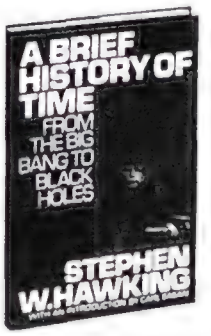

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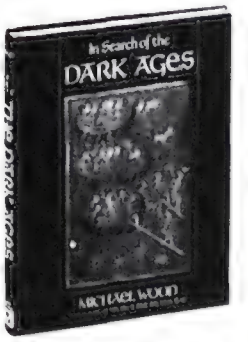

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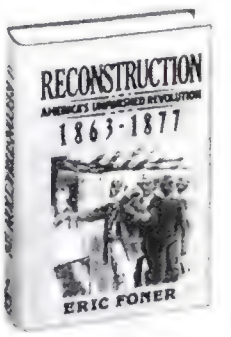

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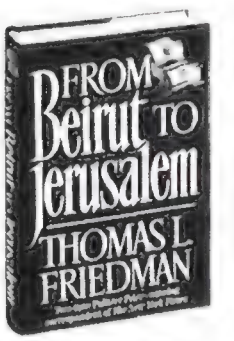

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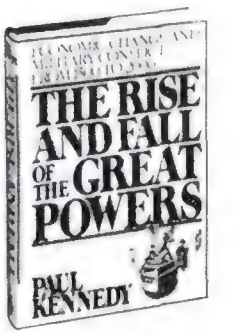

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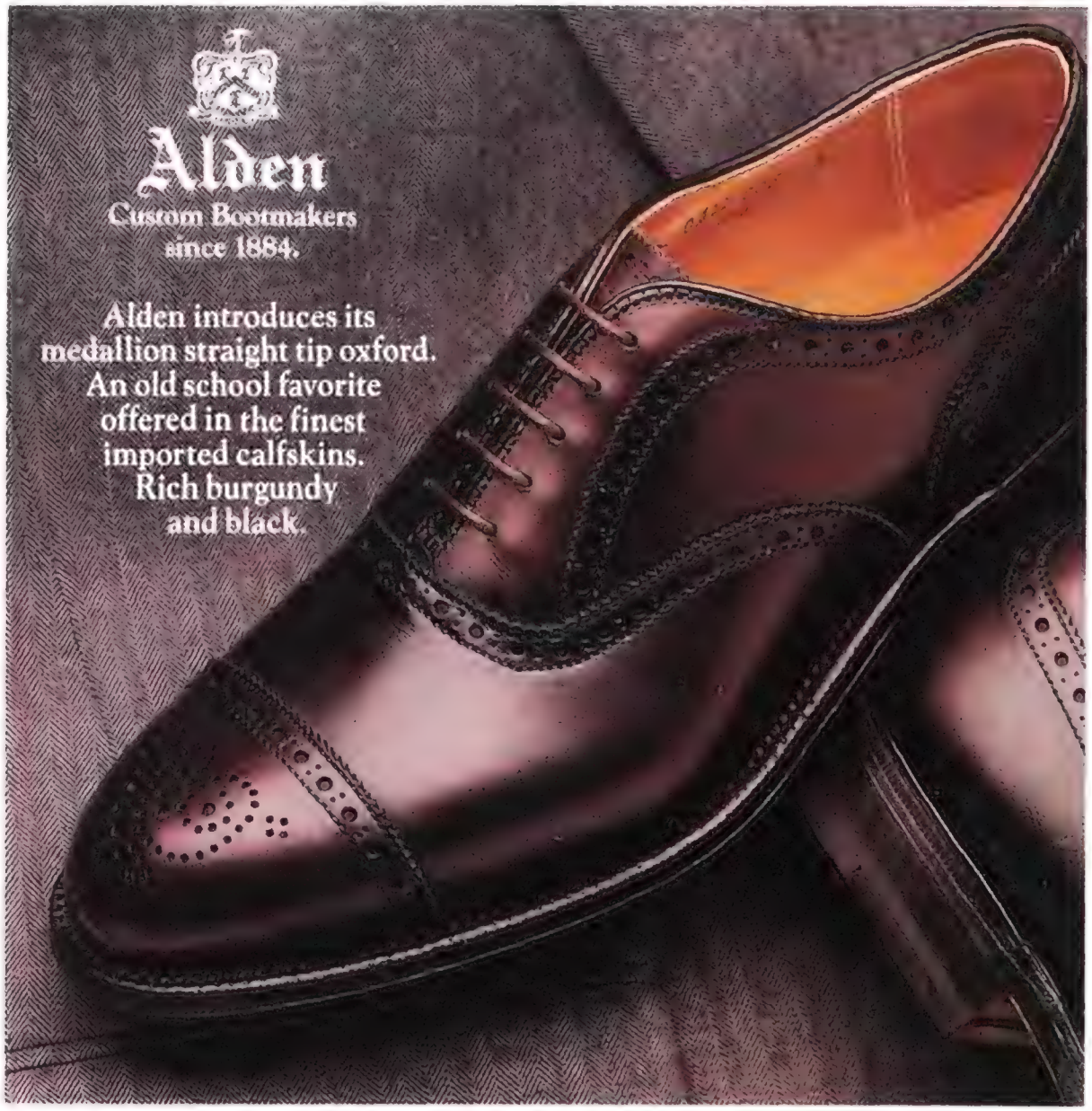
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Letters to the Editor

Fire ants

Dear Sir: Your July article should have pointed out that the only thing that makes much of the South habitable at all is vast amounts of poison pumped underneath foundations of buildings. Even this just barely keeps the attacking hordes away. Anywhere you look there are fire ants. Every square inch of land is covered with fire ants. You pull apart two blades of grass and you find fire ants. These creatures are programmed to attack immediately: you have to keep moving or be stung. You cannot lie in the grass, kids cannot play in the grass, pets will not "go" in the grass, you cannot even stand in the grass.

I personally have been stung thousands of times, sometimes fifty or a hundred at once. The pain is very real.

John R. Hicox
Richmond Hill, Georgia

Dear Sir: There are two grim memories of my move to the South from Ohio 15 years ago. One was the pleading voice of an elderly farmer at an open meeting with an EPA regional director in Tampa, Florida, begging him not to ban Mirex. "You don't know what pain is," urged the old gentleman, "until you've been plowing your fields and accidentally furrowed up a dozen fire ant mounds. Almost instantly, the army has swarmed your tractor; your ankles, neck and arms are covered with stings." I hate pesticides, but I had a strong sympathy for the old man, who made his living in his fields.

The other was this transplanted Yankee's first encounter with fire ants. Hearing a scream from my little daughter, I ran to the front yard to find her

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arms and legs being stung by ants. I raced her into the bathroom and sprayed her with the shower nozzle. The ants were suddenly more occupied with swimming than stinging, but she carried the tiny, white scars for a very long time.
Joseph C. Middleton
Flowery Branch, Georgia

Dear Sir: Our relatively benign New England ants succumb readily whenever I apply my low-cost, environmentally safe insecticide—a kettle of boiling water poured over the nest. I assume that the water penetrates the tunnels to reach the queen as well: the nest is not rebuilt. A treatment for fire ants?
Sally W. Beckett
Exeter, New Hampshire

Dear Sir: What the fire ants want in our closets and cabinets is a puzzlement. They forgo sugar and real food for clothes, boxes and linens.

Our next homesite will be out of state far from fire ants.
Monnie McCallick
Bishop, Texas

Dear Sir: Earlier this year my yard was covered with fire ant mounds. The big chemical companies would have us believe that the only way to combat these pests is through use of their products. I have dead proof in my yard that naturally occurring organisms are most effective. I used a product consisting of parasites (*Pyemotes tritici*) that live all over the world. They will attack and kill fire ants but do not search for new ant colonies. They can get down to where the queens are and will remain active as long as they can find a host—without one they die in three to five days.

The drawback: it's not a practical treatment for several acres.
Katherine E. Stavinoha
Austin, Texas

Dear Sir: We and our daughter have beds of mint, in which none of us have ever seen a fire ant. My son-in-law placed a mint sprig on a nest; the ants moved their nest. I tried the same thing, and again they moved. Out in the yard today, I saw no mounds. Is mint the answer?
J. W. Leake
Pasadena, Texas

Dear Sir: Let me warn you about a species potentially more dangerous than the fire ant, one that originated in Africa and has spread to all of the continents—yes, even Antarctica. While many insects produce toxins that they inject by means of a bite or sting, this critter produces several toxins that it sprays indiscriminately throughout its environment. It forms huge colonies and, as with the fire ant, colony size has been rapidly increasing—some cover many square miles and contain millions of individuals, with virtually no other species to be found within the area. Pathways between colonies also tend to be devoid of other life; in California, for instance, there are broad trails cleared of everything but oleanders. Talk about stripping away biodiversity! They are capable of killing baby birds, fawns, children, one another, you name it. They reproduce at a phenomenal rate, and neither scientists nor politicians have found an effective way to control them.

We have met the enemy . . .
Joy Fatooh
Benton, California

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Jamaica Bay

Dear Sir: One of the accomplishments of the National Park Service has been a unique relationship with the New York City Board of Education, resulting in the establishment of the Gateway Environmental Study Center.

Now well into its second decade, the center has been a source of outstanding environmental education for thousands of teachers and tens of thousands of students. It is one of the few places in this great urban area where you can see the horizon, and the experiences gained there have been very enriching.
Kenneth Kowald
Richmond Hill, New York

Dear Sir: In 1934, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia appointed Robert Moses as New York's first citywide Parks Commissioner. Moses recognized the potential of Jamaica Bay. It had been mapped and zoned at the behest of a number of less-than-altruistic landowners as a vast industrial port, to be larger than the combined ports of Liverpool, Hamburg and Rotterdam. Its numerous small islands were to be blotted out and two large islands created, to be approached by navigation channels. Moses immediately wiped out *that* planning and zoning. He saw Jamaica Bay as the focus of a large-scale conservation and recreation plan with, on its borders, housing, sewage treatment and transportation.

Achievement took him about 20 years and involved battles with greedy landowners, a fight with a sanitation commissioner who wanted to use the bay for a garbage dump, and complex financing.

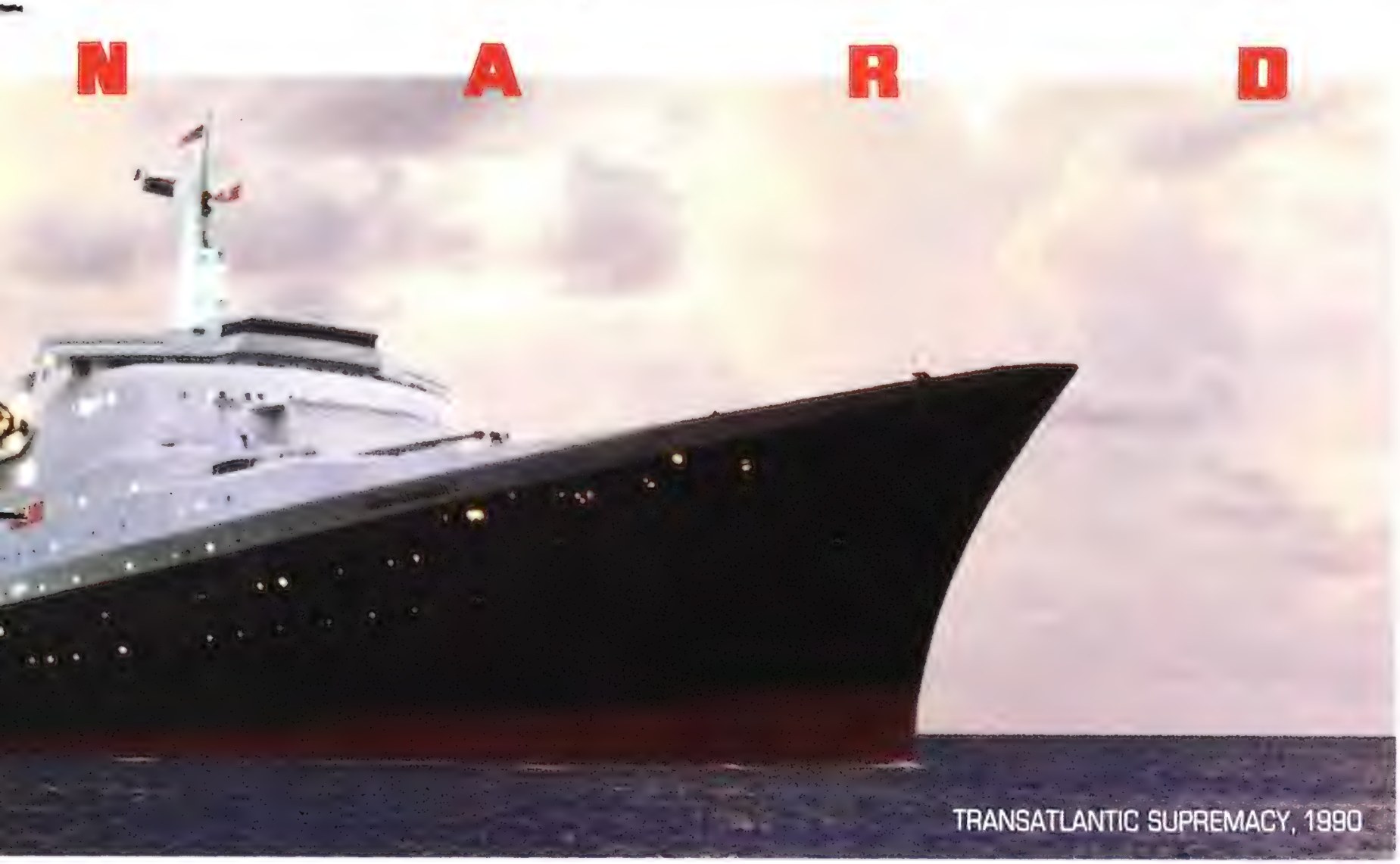
When Moses had finished the job in the mid-'50s, Jamaica Bay Park was one of the few conservation areas of such scale within the limits of the world's large cities. It was and is a major natural wildlife refuge; its fringes were and are waterfront recreation developments; and its waters are ideal for small boats.
Arnold H. Vollmer
New York City

The Danube

Dear Sir: Rudolph Chelminski's extraneous and unnecessary comments about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers appear to be an effort to denigrate it by implying it is interested only in the destruction of the beauty of streams better left in their natural condition.

Early in the 19th century, as the only large engineering organization in the country, the Corps was diverted from its military duties to improve the nation's waterways for navigation. Flood control responsibilities were imposed on it roughly half a century ago. In performing both functions it responds, to the best of its staff's abilities, to the desires of the country as expressed by the Congress, and I am proud to have been one of its officers for 25 years.
John P. Beeson
Austin, Texas

Dear Sir: "Muslim zealots"—these two words are so frequently linked in popular and—*hélas*—even scholarly publications that the first term has become coterminous in meaning with the second. What about "Christian zealots"? In July 1099, after Jerusalem fell to the Christian armies, the Crusaders, under the command of Raymond of St. Giles, massacred nearly all the Jews of the



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Holy City—not to mention many Muslims—in a dreadful scene of carnage. Obviously, the Muslims have not historically had a monopoly over either zealotry or fanaticism.

I cite these historical events only to call attention to the fact that in the late 20th century our daily language and discourse are still imbued with inexcusable prejudices and intellectually untenable biases, too often aimed at Muslims and Islam.
Julia A. Clancy-Smith
Charlottesville, Virginia

Dear Sir: Your author refers to the "U.S. Marine gunboats that prowled the Mekong" river.

During our country's involvement in Vietnam, the river patrol boats that operated in the delta and other areas of the Mekong were crewed primarily by men of the U.S. Navy.
D. A. De Matteo
Baker, Florida

Bubble gum

Dear Sir: I presume most of your readers are beyond puberty. An article on bubble gum? For shame.
Robert C. Rose
Columbus, Georgia

Dear Sir: At St. Joseph's grammar school in Roselle, New Jersey, during the 1940s, if we were caught chewing gum we had to wear it on our nose for the day. We boys would buy handfuls of gum in order to get the baseball cards, and it just didn't seem right to throw it all away. We were presumptuous enough to think we could chew three pieces without anyone noticing, and so it was common to see students wearing big pink wads.
Jim Grimes
West Palm Beach, Florida

Dear Sir: In 1949 I was scoutmaster of Troop 134, Boy Scouts of America in East Douglas, Massachusetts. We decided that as a service project we would clean all the gum from the bottoms of the folding chairs in the town hall, where movies were shown on Saturday nights. In those days, kids sat in the first four rows, teenage boys and their dates in the last four rows and adults in the middle six. Using scout knives, chisels and hammers, we cleaned the bottoms of all the seats and filled three ten-gallon buckets with the old gum. I was amazed to find that about 60 percent came from seats the adults sat in!
Bruce McMahon
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Dear Sir: Hendrickson does not explain what happens to used bubble gum.
Gary E. Grunder
Lewes, Delaware
What happens to used bubble gum is that it is spat out indiscriminately and gets on my *shoe.* Ed.

Radar

Dear Sir: You failed to mention Henry Tizard, whom many Britons feel did more politically than anyone to insure that by 1939 a workable radio detection system was operational. Also, no mention is made of J. T. Randall and H. A. Boot of the physics department of the University of Birmingham. In April 1940, they developed the cavity magnetron, which made possible the generation of radar signals of centimeter length and hundreds of kilowatts of power.

Centimeter radar was the essential basis of precision airborne radar, particularly of that code-named H2S, which the RAF used to find targets at night irrespective of weather. More important, by enabling the RAF and Royal Navy to detect the periscopes and snorkels of German submarines, it, more than anything else, allowed the Allies to win the Battle of the Atlantic during March to August 1943.
M.R.J. Wyllie
Troy, Virginia

When it came to TV. . .

Dear Sir: My daughter is forever accusing me of remembering things no one ever heard of. But if I am a museum piece, SMITHSONIAN always backs me up.

Only yesterday I was having lunch with three of my septuagenarian and octogenarian friends. We all remembered where we had seen our first TV (black-and-white of course). At the Golden Gate International Exposition, held on San Francisco's Treasure Island in 1939. Your poor Daniel Pinkwater didn't have his until 1948.

The TV shows he described recalled my long-ago Sunday school class of junior high kids. I asked them if they knew anything about chastity. Charles, the show-off, said he did—"Hopalong Chastity" was his favorite TV show.
Harriet Titus
Santa Rosa, California

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Around the Mall and beyond

Two old adversaries now stand side by side in NASM, as we call the National Air and Space Museum. Enter from the Mall, and there they are in the Milestones of Flight Hall, against the wall to your left, across the way from Professor Langley's little model Aerodrome No. 5—the one that flew so well.

These things could fly well, too, in their way. The American Pershing II, nearly 35 feet tall, could rise from the ground in a blast of fire and fury, and soar about a thousand miles before demolishing its target. The Soviet SS-20, almost 20 feet taller, could go three times as far and then dispatch three separate warheads.

These incredible works of Man never had to make a flight for real—for which Man is deeply grateful. They're now being eliminated under the terms of the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) Treaty. Why are they among our Milestones of Flight? Because they're the first nonobsolete nuclear missiles to be scrubbed. Also, they were considered the most accurate and deadly of the missiles banned by the INF Treaty.

It seemed to museum director Martin Harwit a good idea to exhibit these two former enemies together and to suggest that the Soviets do the same. The rockets would remind new generations of the bad not-so-old days of the Cold War and serve as tangible evidence of better times.

So our Smithsonian folks talked to VIPs in the State and Defense departments, in the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and at the Soviet Embassy and Ministry of Defense. After more than two years of negotiation, the exhibit opened in June. Gregg Herken, chairman of NASM's space history department, says a similar display is to open this fall at the Soviet Central Military Museum.

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Soviet SS-20 (left) and U.S. Pershing II missiles now stand together at NASM.

The sight of the missiles will produce a twitch in the scalp if you come from my generation, and if you ever saw a stick of dynamite at work. As a boy in New Hampshire, I watched in awe as the local explosives man examined a granite boulder in our driveway that had bent a couple of axles, and then calmly blew it to smithereens with a little cylindrical stick in a plain brown wrapper. I figure it weighed about half a pound.

The Pershing II warhead could pack the wallop of about *two hundred million* of those sticks. And we built 234 of them. An SS-20 warhead was *five times* as powerful as a Pershing II, and each SS-20 carried three warheads. The Soviets built 654 of these missiles, and that's

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So I contemplate NASM's new display with my own wild surmise (just how many boulders are there in Mother Earth, anyway?); also with solemn appreciation for the official easing, after all these years, of the great weight.

Even during the Cold War, of course, there was scholarly and cultural exchange between the Smithsonian and the USSR. At NASM, the Soviet space effort went on view years ago when the 1975 hookup of their Soyuz module and our Apollo was memorialized by the display of the two huge craft in Space Hall. Last March the Resident Associate Program (RAP) joined with NASA to get the Soyuz flight engineer, cosmonaut Valeriy Kubasov, to talk about Soviet space training and lead his audience to the Apollo-Soyuz exhibit for a close-up reminder of his epochal mission.

The Resident Associates, in fact, have been quick to reach through the Iron Curtain as it became more shadow than substance. Two summers ago, RAP offered a course entitled "The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev." The following spring they sponsored a lecture on the USSR's mission to Mars and a festival of 22 Soviet films. A concert by a Soviet jazz band followed, and last fall, the Soviet Embassy invited Resident Associate families to spend the day at its compound on Tunlaw Road. There were dances and games, and the American kids were all given Russian names.

I went to a similar kids' party at the Czechoslovakian Embassy, also arranged by Roslyn Beitler, program manager for the Young Associates. The Czechoslovakian children all wore white shirts—the girls with pink skirts, the boys with pink string ties. One looked like my oldest grandson, except for that tie. The Czech kids sang, did a dance or two, explained where their country is and asked that each of them be taught a couple of English words.

The Resident Associate Program deserves to be mentioned first because RAP is a quarter of a century old this month. It's celebrating with a symposium on computer graphics that starts on September 7. That event will be followed by at least 25 (count 'em) performances and lectures, with receptions and special viewings of Smithsonian treasures, that will continue through the fall. Many such events in the past have drawn expertise or inspiration from the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The National Associates have also found the Iron Curtain penetrable. As I write this I read in the travel section of the Sunday paper about a Smithsonian cruise on the Upper Volga, one of a number of tours through formerly forbidden territory. Diane Bolz, an Associate Editor of this magazine, without whom these columns would be an awful mess, is a veteran of such Smithsonian trips and recently returned from a Foreign Study Tour, first organized five years ago, that focused on history and culture along the Danube. She says they visited Bucharest, Belgrade, Budapest, Bratislava, and other places that don't begin with "B," and found the changed attitude of Eastern Europe as spectacular as the scenery. "No more gunboats trailing after us on the river," she told me. "And at certain points we could actually see where the barbed wire at national borders had been cut down and watchtowers abandoned."

Closer to home, the Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs leaped the Iron Curtain back in 1976, when its fes-

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tival on the Mall included the folkways of Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. I remember also the great music and dances, two years ago, from Soviet republics like Georgia and the Ukraine.

Our art museums have consistently delved into the USSR and Eastern Europe for various exhibits. The Sackler Gallery people worked with the Hermitage and the museums of the Kremlin to put on the Timur (Tamerlane) show and are now planning a display of Islamic treasures from the Kremlin State Armory. The Hirshhorn Museum put on "Avant-Garde in Russia, 1920-1930" nine years ago, and two major shows, of Central European art and of Russian and Soviet painting, in 1988.

Readers will recall this magazine's story on the "Crossroads of Continents" exhibit at Natural History in the October 1988 issue. The show described the mingling of cultures across the Bering Strait and was put together jointly by Soviets, Canadians and us. "Crossroads" is now gearing up to tour the USSR.

Back in 1983, SITES, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, opened "The Precious Legacy," a superb exhibit of Judaic art from the State Jewish Museum in Prague. Two years later, SITES worked out a deal with the Soviets to exchange shows. I remember seeing the astonishing collection of Russian paintings dating from 1850 to 1910 that SITES brought to the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in 1986. In return, "New Horizons: American Painting 1840-1910" went to the USSR the following year.

Scholars, of course, have long been touching base with their colleagues behind the Iron Curtain. The list of joint scholarship with our Soviet and Eastern European counterparts includes examples in East Germany, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, as well as the Soviet Union. Our astrophysical scientists collaborate with the USSR's Space Research Institute and with Czechoslovakia's Ondrejov Observatory. NASM's Von Hardesty and two colleagues, digging up material for the current exhibit on Igor Sikorsky, became the first Westerners allowed to carry on research in the USSR's Central State Military Archives. Paul Spangler, curator of entomology at Natural History, has done field research in Yugoslavia. And botanist Stan Shetler, now acting deputy director at that museum, has been collaborating with the Central Siberian Botanical Garden since 1983 on a special plant-collecting project.

Czech scholars have used the Hrdlicka Fund, set up by the Smithsonian's famous Czech-born anthropologist, Ales Hrdlicka, to visit our Institution in Washington. And Hendrik Wolda, biologist with our Tropical Research Institute in Panama, has worked with two Hungarian colleagues on insect populations in that country.

And now, at last, the politicians have caught up with the scholars and researchers and museum curators and the hordes of intelligent, interested people who make up the Associates and who visit the museums. East and West have officially met, after all. Scientific cooperation becomes easier; great art travels where it hasn't before. So do more and more people, slaking the curiosity that characterizes everyone concerned with the Smithsonian.

All this jumble of memories, hopes and thoughts arises from the sight of two big, old, empty, harmless rockets. I guess that's why they're on display.

Edwards Park

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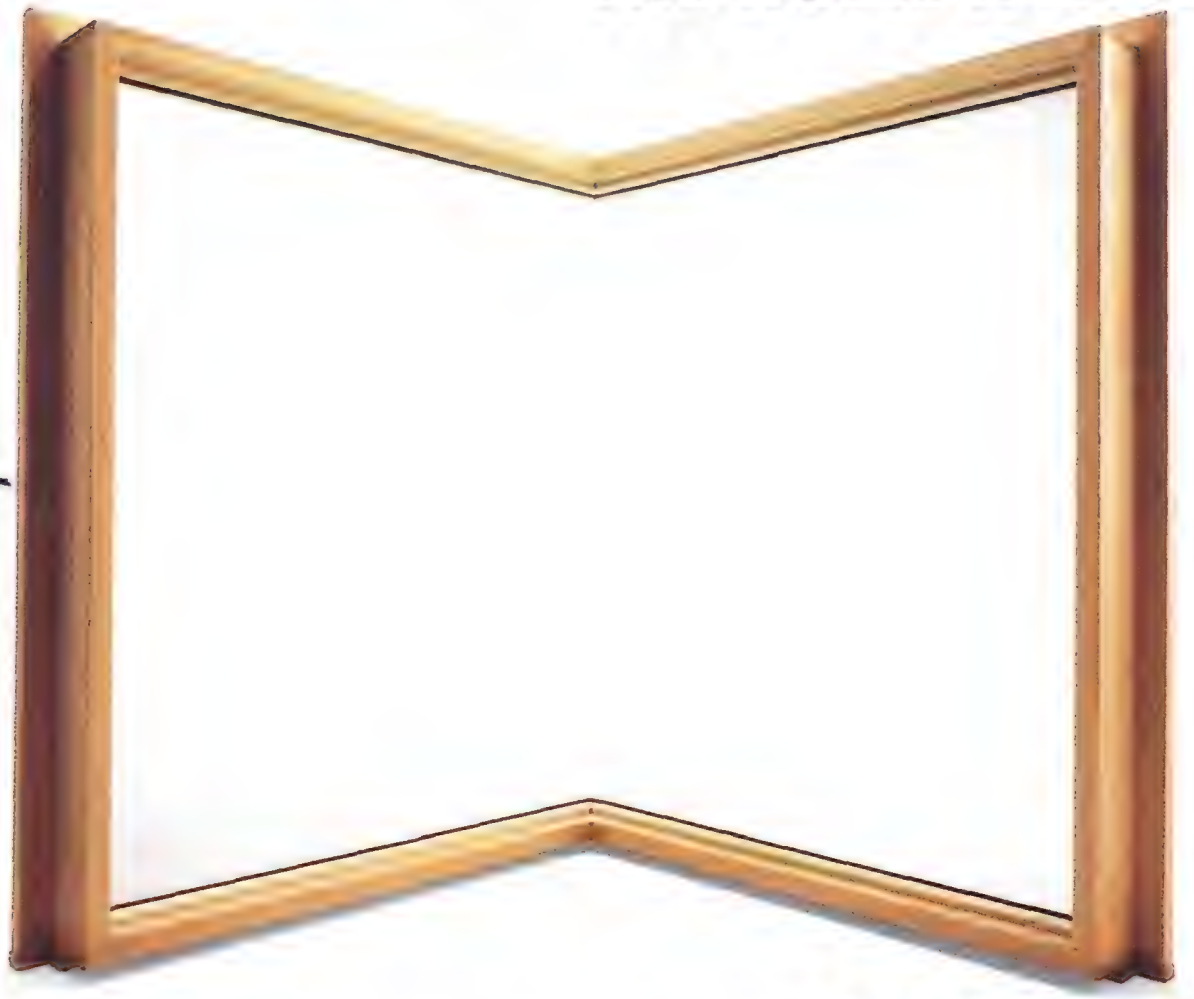

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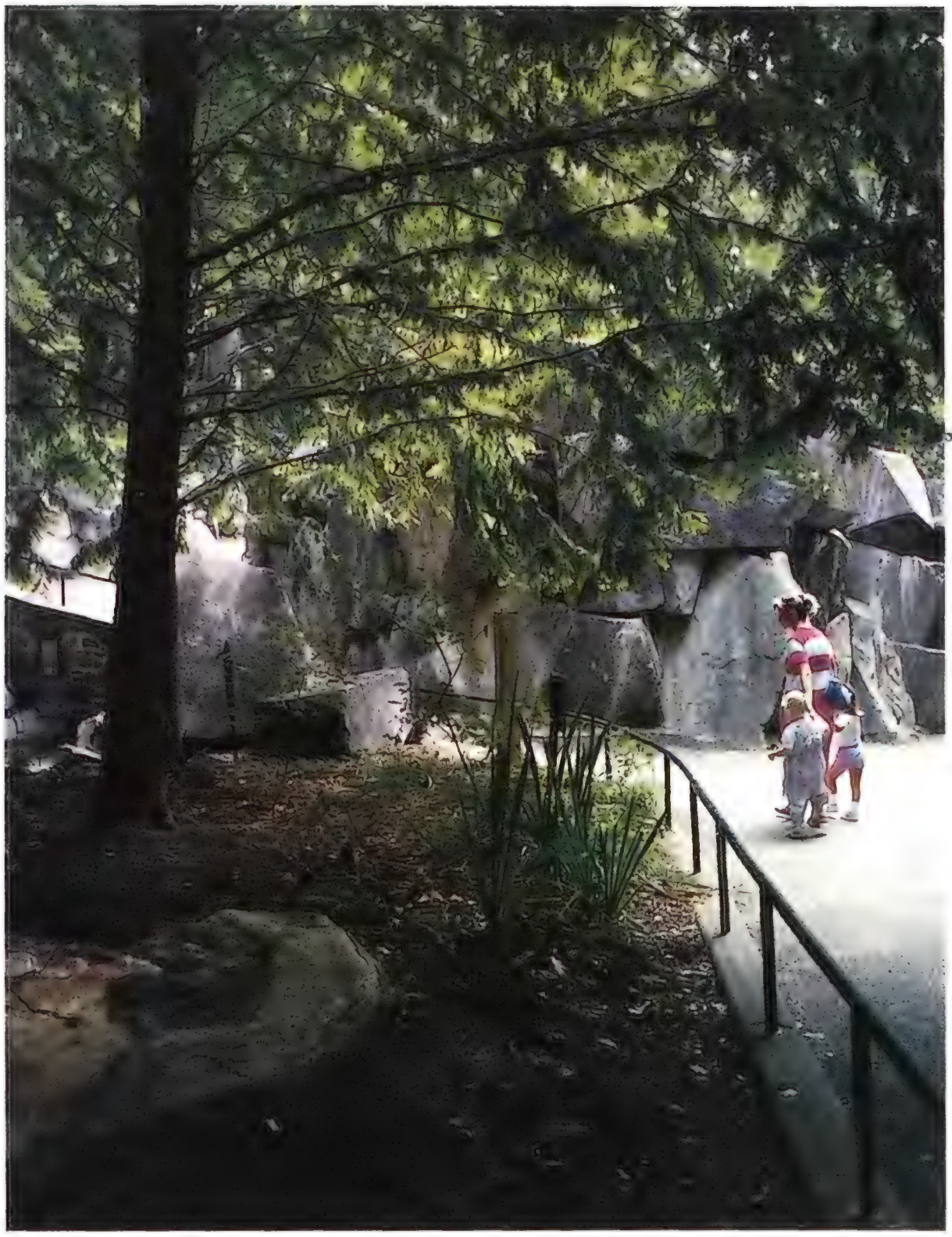

Feathery foliage of dawn redwood shades trail near the zoo's beaver exhibit. In recent years, the fast-growing tree has become popular for landscaping.

The dawn redwood, thought extinct for millions of years, is now alive and flourishing at the National Zoo

Stop press! Good news!

Instead of another story of endangered flora or fauna, this is a tale of a relict species—by which we mean here a plant or animal that suddenly turns up alive and well in a distant corner of the world long after everyone thought it had been dead for years. In this case, about two million years. The object at hand is the dawn redwood, a tree that at the moment is helping the National Zoo celebrate its 100th birthday. One of the many remarkable things about the dawn redwood is that, unlike most other conifers, it is deciduous and sheds its needles in the fall.

If you have a chance to visit the zoo, you'll find a small grove of dawn redwoods along a man-made stream on the Valley Trail just before you get to the beavers. They are slender trees with red-brown bark and branches that droop delicately, like the hands of a ballet dancer. The needles—bright green in the summer, turning pink-brown before dropping off in the fall—remind you of hemlock. But they're longer and more delicate, as if they'd been painted on the branch by a Japanese artist.

For years the immediate ancestors of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, to give the species its proper name, had been known to *paleobotanists* (to give them their proper name) only from fossil records. From these, the trees could be dated back to Mesozoic times, some 100 million years ago when dinosaurs still roamed the Earth. At that time the dawn redwood appears to have flourished in Northern forests around the world, including North America. Over time, its natural range reduced to smaller and smaller areas by causes unknown, the dawn redwood—like the dinosaur—had apparently disappeared. The last known fossil deposits of the tree—found in Japan—date back to about two million years ago.

Then, one day in 1944, Tsang Wang of China's Central Bureau of Forest Research came across three unusual trees along a small stream in the middle of an obscure valley in northeastern Szechwan province. He collected specimens of branches and cones, but it wasn't until the following year that another Chinese botanist, C. L. Wu, examined the specimens, recognized them as remarkable and brought them to the attention of other botanists. They were able to identify a living species of prehistoric tree previously unreported among the extant flora of China—or anywhere else. The natives called it *sui-sa* ("water fir" or "water spruce") and named the remote valley in which some of the trees had been found Sui-sa-pa after it.

As its Western name suggests, the dawn redwood is related to two other kinds of redwood. One is the famed *Sequoia sempervirens* of the West Coast. The *Guinness Book of World Records*

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lists one of these as standing 362 feet tall—and still growing—in Humboldt County, California. The other is the *Sequoiadendron giganteum* of the Sierra Nevada, shorter than its coastal cousins but of greater girth. You've seen one of these if you've ever seen the much-reproduced picture of the redwood with a hole large enough for a car to drive through. The dawn redwood grows 3 feet or more a year when it is young, and reaches heights of about 150 feet.

Even when the dawn redwood was rediscovered half a century ago, the tree's continued survival seemed precarious. For one thing, the vast steady press of the Chinese population led farmers to cut down the water-loving trees to make room for new ricefields up in the high valleys. In 1948 researcher J. Linsley Gressitt was dispatched to China to look into the dawn redwood situation and reported back in *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences.* "Possibly," he wrote, "the massacre 300 years ago of most of the people in eastern Szechuan by Imperial forces for failure to pay taxes may have been an important factor in saving the tree from extinction in recent years." He also noted that mountain people predicted which crops would be successful on the basis of dawn redwood cone development—lots of cones high up meant a good rice crop. As a result they saved and grew at least a few of the trees for purposes of divination.

In 1947 Chinese botanists sent seeds from the amazing relict to Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, which had helped finance research expeditions in China. The Arboretum distributed dawn redwood seeds widely to other scientific institutions and arboretums. Today the trees are flourishing around the world. Like that of Mark Twain, the reports of their death were greatly exaggerated.

Happily, relicts of all sorts of species believed to be extinct do keep turning up. Perhaps the most famous is the coelacanth, a fish that was thought to have become extinct 60 million years ago, until one was caught off the coast of southern Africa in 1938. And only last February a previously unknown species of lion tamarin monkey (SMITHSONIAN, July 1989) was found by Brazilian scientists on an island just off Sao Paulo. Among mammals, there's *Hapalemur simus,* the greater bamboo lemur known in fossil records of a few thousand years ago and refound in Madagascar by Patricia Wright of Duke University's Department of Biological Anthropology and Anatomy in 1986. Or *Chaetomys subspinosus,* a porcupine with a semi-prehensile tail—unseen for years and thought extinct since 1952—which was rediscovered four years ago in the devastated Atlantic forest of Brazil. But the prize among relicts—for numbers of vertebrate species at least—seems to belong to ornithologists. There's Jerdon's courser, a sandpiperlike bird, last seen in 1900 until it was rediscovered in 1985. In fact, so many bird relicts are being discovered that S. Dillon Ripley, Smithsonian Secretary Emeritus, and his research associate Bruce Beehler are hard at work on a paper on the relict birds of India alone.

What the next relict may be or where it may be found is anybody's guess. There are even those who will bet you real money that sooner or later, perhaps in some hidden corner of the vast Dark Continent, the earth will quake and from the deepest jungle, with an ear-splitting roar, will emerge a relict dinosaur.

That'll be the day!

Thomas H. Wolf

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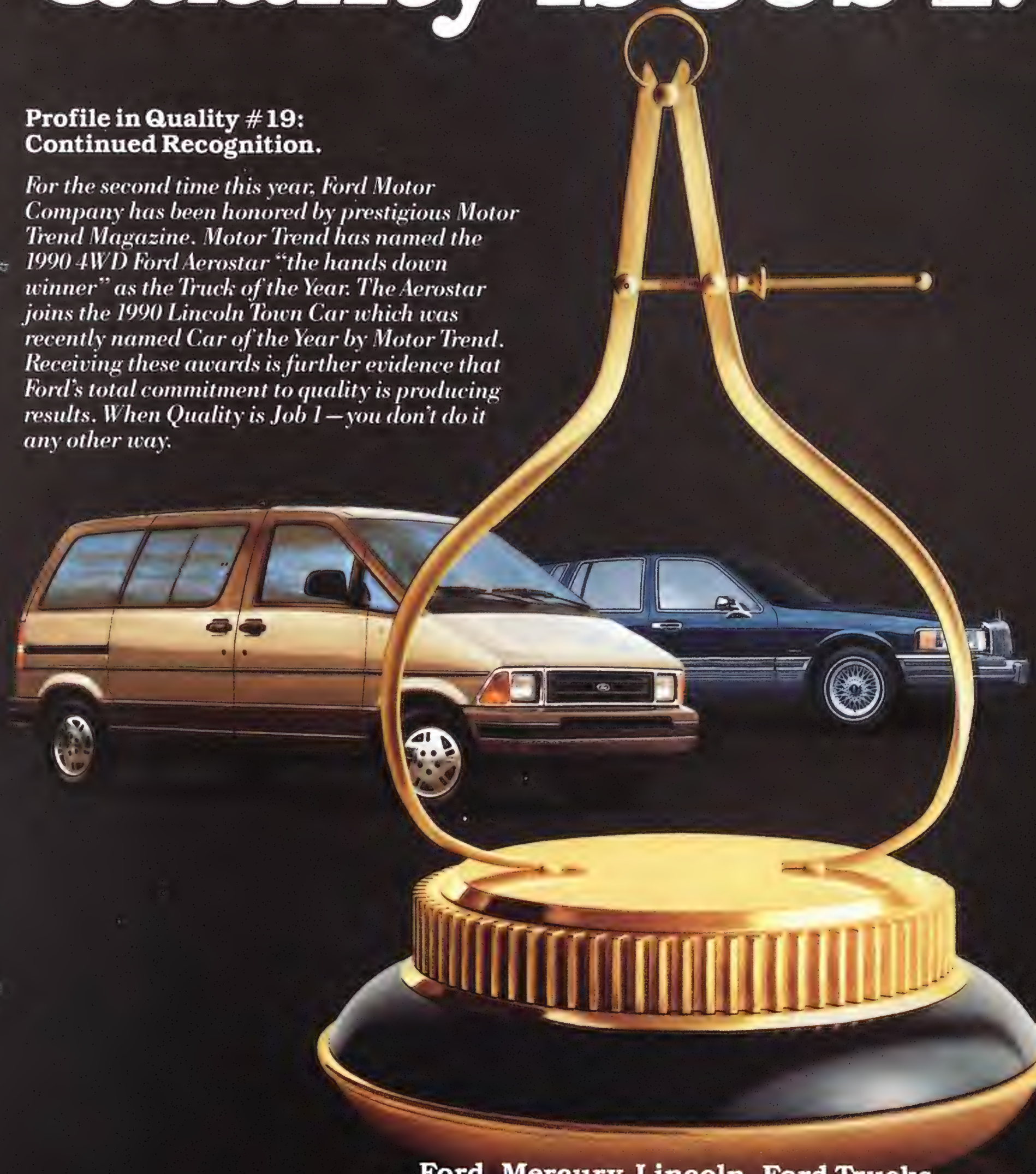

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Buckle up—Together we can save lives.

Sweetwater River winds through greenery next to Rattlesnake Mountains on BLM territory in Wyoming.

By Richard Conniff

Once the secret domain of miners and ranchers, the BLM is going public

Wildlife and recreation are new priorities for the Bureau of Land Management on 272 million federal acres now viewed as a national treasure

With its brawny ridges and arid plains, the region epitomizes federal holdings known as the public lands.

One day last fall, a group of 400 wildlife activists assembled in Minneapolis to mark the 25th anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Among those on the dais was Cy Jamison, an outgoing, heavyset man who had recently become director of the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM). When it came time for Jamison to leave for another appointment, the speaker paused to thank him for coming and to note that the BLM was the only one of the agencies responsible for administering federal lands to send its top official. The crowd gave Jamison a standing ovation.

It was an improbable outpouring of enthusiasm. Jamison had spent most of the previous eight years working as an adviser to a Western Congressman who is well known for his opposition to environmental causes, particularly wilderness. He had also worked briefly for James Watt when Watt was Secretary of the Interior. Moreover, applauding anyone from the BLM has long been regarded in many circles as an un-American activity. Certainly no environmentalist had felt the urge in years. Jamison himself later joked that he didn't know if they were clapping because he showed up, or because he was leaving.

The truth was that, in his first three months in office, Jamison had already established himself as an unlikely symbol of change at an agency that environmentalists, among others, have come to regard as one of the most backward and benighted in Washington, D.C. By making wildlife and recreation his highest priorities—and pushing for the money to make things happen "on the ground," to use a favorite BLM phrase—Jamison had also produced an upwelling of

Sierra Club lobbyist Debbie Sease welcomes reforms but doubts Jamison has the clout to make them stick.

BLM director Cy Jamison has vowed to move agency toward a more balanced approach to the environment.

hope among the agency's own long-suffering employees. The question everywhere wasn't why a person of his background was making such promises—Jamison was perfectly frank about that—but whether he could deliver on them, and the early indications were positive. "I'll tell you what about old Cy," a BLM staffer in the field exulted, "I really believe the guy is serious. It's the biggest opportunity we've had in 15 years. If we don't take the initiative, they ought to take us out and shoot us." Given the BLM's history, the possibility of being shot was not entirely loose talk.

One of the first things people tell you about the BLM is that it suffers from an image problem, which is an understatement. They mean in part that hardly anybody has ever heard of it—an unlikely enough problem for an agency that controls one-eighth of all the acreage in the United States (the so-called public lands), as well as the minerals under roughly another eighth. Talk about the Park Service, the BLM's glamorous sibling in the Interior Department, and people automatically think of Yellowstone or Yosemite. Talk about the Forest Service and they think of Smokey Bear. "You talk about the public lands," says one longtime BLM employee, "and they go absolutely blank."

But the BLM's image problem runs much deeper than mere obscurity. Long considered a "stepchild agency," the BLM has never shaken off the notion that it is second-rate. Whereas the Park Service is heir to the conservationist vision of John Muir, and the Forest Service enjoys a professional cachet passed down from Gifford Pinchot, the closest thing to an intellectual tradition at the BLM is the stake-it-and-take-it mental-

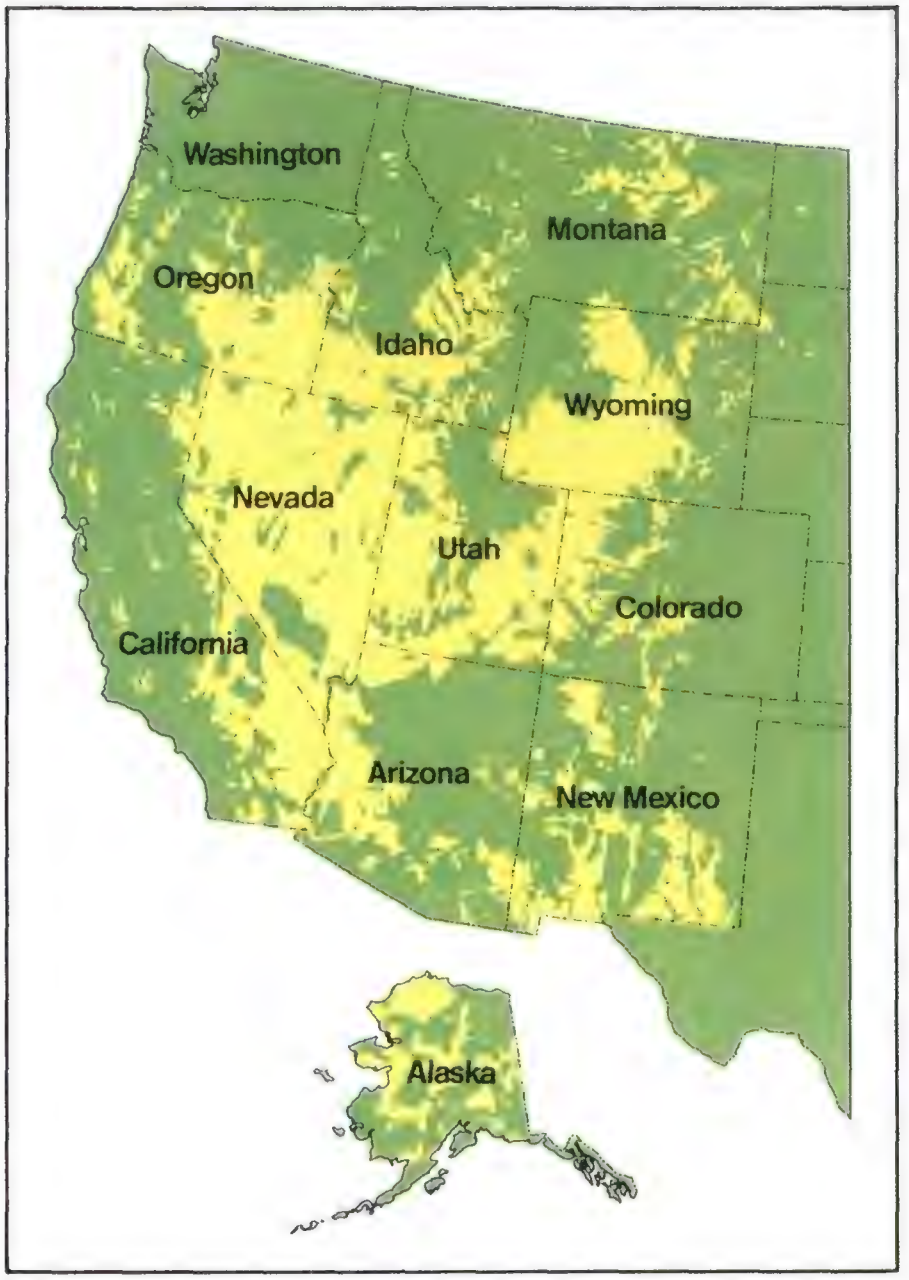
ity that settled the West. Created in 1946, when the General Land Office and the federal Grazing Service were merged, the BLM did not even have a charter until the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). That law gave the agency the grand—some would say impossible—mission of multiple-use management, which boils down to exploiting the land and conserving it at the same time. With more acreage than the Park and Forest services combined, and a fraction of the budget, the BLM was supposed to figure out how to keep the land healthy while also accommodating cowpokes, strip miners, dirt bikers, bird-watchers and tree huggers, all vocal, all willing to sue for their conflicting rights.

The BLM's traditional attitude was to regard the land as not worth a fight. The agency had inherited the mostly arid and mountainous countryside that *didn't* get taken in the great land-office giveaways of the 19th century. It also inherited the land-office history of spectacularly lax management, in which fraud was rampant and individuals typically lost out to land-grabbing speculators and syndicates. The law required a homesteader to live on his claim and improve it, but with local land districts running more than 20,000 square miles in size, hardly anyone was checking. A cartoonist in 1867 depicted "improvements" in which a house "twelve by fourteen" was measured in inches, not feet, and a "bona fide residence" was built on wheels, so the speculator could move it onto future claims. Timber was plundered so rapidly that officials in several Western states urged selling huge federal landholdings before they were rendered worthless. In all, the General Land Office sold, gave away or transferred a billion acres during the 19th century.

The 272 million acres of public lands remaining, mostly in 11 Western states, have often been called "the lands no one wanted," and the BLM took that phrase to heart. It tended to disparage its own holdings in part to justify the way it managed them. Except for a few bright years after passage of FLPMA, hardly anything in its promotional literature conjured up its extraordinary wildlife (from Pacific salmon to grizzly bears) or magnificent scenery (such as the King Range on the California coast), or an assortment of Indian archaeological sites and other cultural resources ("cultural ruins" to Jamison's predecessor) unrivaled by any institution in the world. BLM land, as Manuel Lujan remarked last year, shortly after becoming Secretary of the Interior, was "a place with a lot of grass for cows."

The most troubling part of the BLM's image problem is that almost everyone in the West, and especially the 20,000 grazing permittees who benefit most from its lenient policies, seems to hate the agency, which has come to represent federal intrusion on what they think of as *their* land. As a witness once testified before a Senate Public Land subcommittee, "nothing delights the heart of a Nevada cowpoke more than to smell the hide of a BLM director roasting over a sagebrush fire." It was no coincidence that, a decade ago, the Sagebrush Rebellion against federal authority arose largely in Nevada, where the BLM controls nearly 70 percent of the land, nor was it an accident when the Reagan Administration appointed Robert Burford, a Colorado sagebrush rebel who ran livestock on BLM land and had been cited for breaking its rules, to direct the agency through the 1980s.

Burford was enthusiastically pro-development and anti-wilderness. He gave mining greater priority, lobbied hard to make grazing fees even lower and gutted conservation programs. The effects of all that provoked increasing protest. A 1988 report by the General Accounting Office (GAO), a Congressional watchdog agency, charged that 60 percent of the public rangeland was in unsatisfactory condition, and little or noth-



Map shows how the BLM's vast holdings (in yellow) are scattered throughout ten Western states and Alaska.

Richard Conniff's recent contributions include articles on fire ants, the Connecticut River cleanup, Yellowstone National Park and roller coasters.

Beleaguered desert tortoise makes its way in BLM's East Mojave Scenic Area.

Motorcyclists kick up dust at start of a race BLM opposes because of tortoises.

ing was being done to correct overgrazing. Under Burford, political appointees kept career professionals off the backs of traditional users and flushed out those who argued for a less-exploitative approach to the land. The agency staff was demoralized, said GAO auditors. They reported the case of a BLM area manager who caught a rancher cutting trees without authorization in a sensitive riparian zone and ordered him to stop. Word came down through political channels that the BLM manager was to apologize to the rancher—and deliver the wood to his house.

When the White House nominated Burford's replacement last year, environmentalists braced for more of the same. Jamison had spent most of his career behind the scenes, but his association with Watt and Representative Ron Marlenee of Montana, after seven years as a factotum with the BLM in Billings, was sufficiently damning. Debbie Sease, a Sierra Club lobbyist, called him an "ardent proponent of [an] agenda that is antithetical to conservation" and predicted that he would "continue to see BLM as an agency of and for the livestock and mining industries."

What happened instead was that those traditional constituencies began to wonder whether, as Jamison puts it, he was "going green on them." His own early press releases seemed calculated to give that impression: "BLM and The Nature Conservancy Sign Agreement," "BLM joins with Izaak Walton League on Riparian Enhancement Projects," "BLM and Ducks Unlimited Form Wetlands Partnership," "BLM and Center for Plant Conservation Work to Save Rare Species." Where Burford had reinstated the infamous Barstow-to-Vegas motorcycle race through the California desert, the BLM now banned it to protect the desert tortoise. The Sierra Club found itself going to court on behalf of the BLM in the motorcycle case, and Sease later paid Jamison what may be the most effusive compliment a BLM director could expect: "I'm glad he's not as bad as I thought he would be." Perhaps most important, Jamison promised, in effect, that no area manager would have to carry a rancher's wood for him again. Staffers making difficult decisions, even decisions that might be costly to traditional users, could for once expect BLM backing.

Sitting in his large office on the fifth floor of the Interior Department, dressed in shirtsleeves and yellow silk suspenders, Jamison looks like the classic Irish urban pol, a mixture of shrewdness, affability and energy. He is 41 years old, but the ample swag of flesh under the chin makes him look older. There is nothing about him, down to the polished burgundy wingtips, to suggest his eastern Montana upbringing in a family of seven children, in which he picked up pocket money bucking bales of hay for local ranchers and doing odd jobs at a mink ranch.

"I come from a commodities background—oil and gas, livestock," he says. "I'm not ashamed of that and I support it." But he aims to convey two personal traits to explain why environmentalists may be underestimating him. The first is a scrupulous regard for the letter of the law—in this case FLPMA, which dictates that the BLM is not just a "Bureau of Livestock and Mining," as it has often been called. In his view, balancing the FLPMA equation means increased programs for wildlife, recreation and "a whole bunch of other users who have basically been shortchanged."

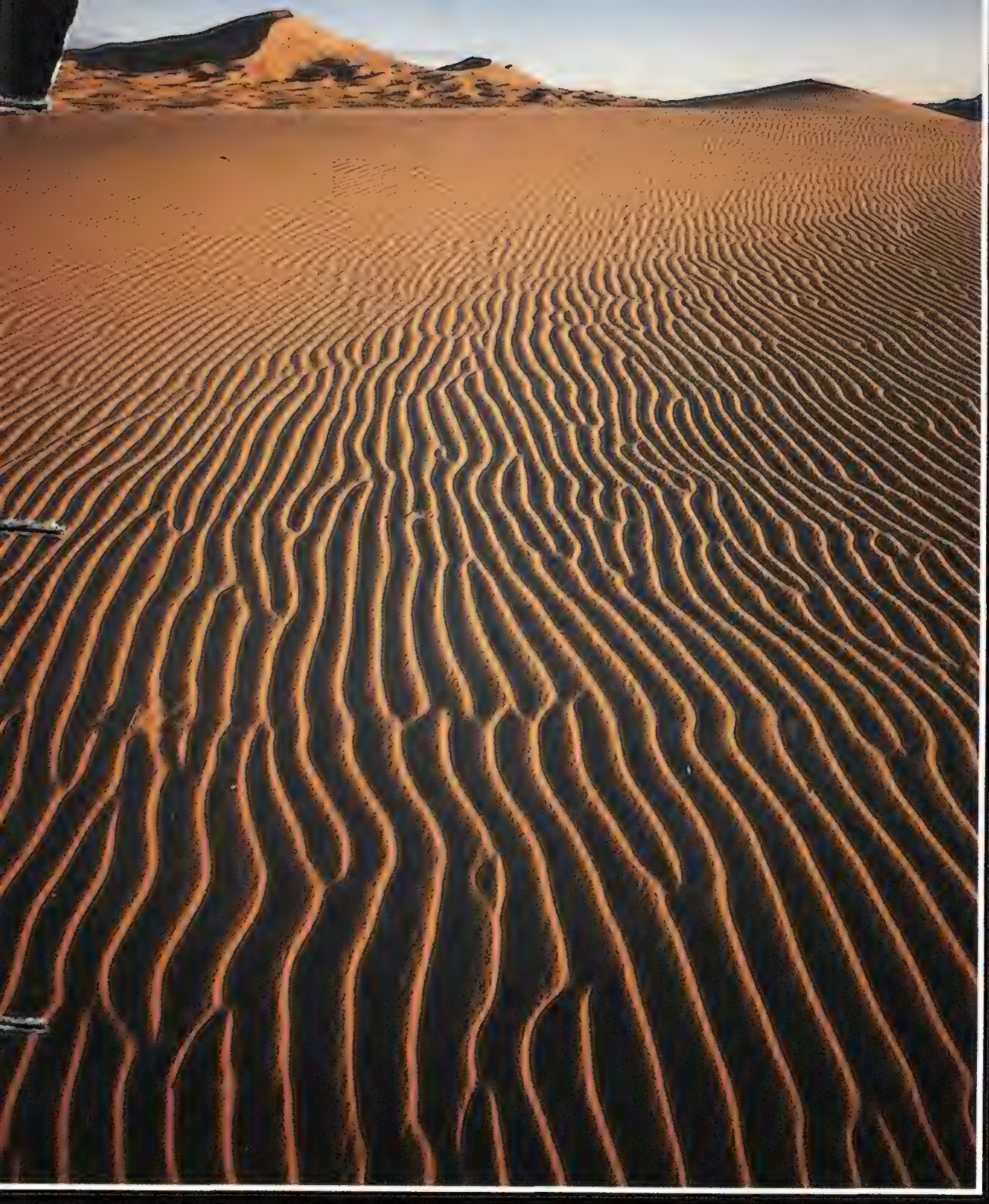
Jamison's other important trait is that he considers himself a realist. He does not claim to be an environ-

Text continues on page 40

Wildflowers parade vivid colors across Cumberland Basin near Colorado's La Plata Mountains.

Joshua trees in Nevada nod their ancient heads at the sunset.

Brush enlivens rocky land enclosed by barbed wire west of the Organ Mountains in southern New Mexico.



Wind-rippled sand at California's Kelso Dunes resembles ocean floor.

Wilson Peak overlooks the San Miguel Mountains and Colorado wilderness.

Eroded Navajo sandstone forms Vermilion Cliffs in Arizona.

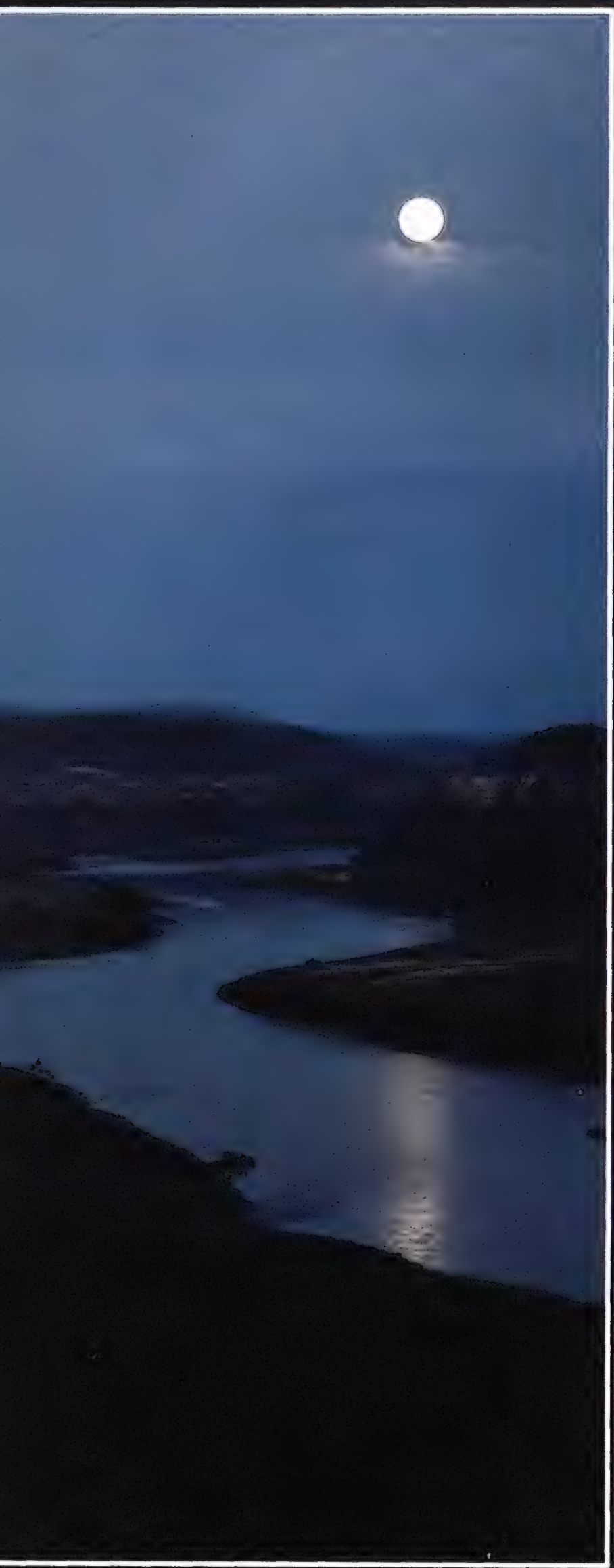
At Utah's Escalante Canyon, glittering creek flows past tree aglow with fall foliage.

Puddle on rock reflects sky above Rattlesnake Canyon, Colorado.

Limestone outcropping overlooks valley beneath snowcapped Lost River Range in Idaho.

Blazing sun bakes the earth in Nevada's Black Rock Desert.

Clouds release rain over grazing lands near Owyhee River in Oregon.



Moon illuminates Missouri River Breaks in Montana.

mentalist, but he is conscious that he works for a President who does. "You reflect what your boss wants to do," he says. Having worked in the Bush campaign, he is also sensitive to political polls: "I'm no dummy. I can read the tea leaves." What they suggest is that a more balanced approach to the environment may be the smartest course for the BLM and also for the BLM's traditional users, who may lose their hold on the public lands altogether if they continue to abuse their privileges. Old hands at the BLM sometimes portray their environmental adversaries as zealots determined to make the public lands "cattle free by '93" ("no moo in '92" is said to be the more radical alternative). But the truth is that the mounting weight and breadth of sober environmental criticism has brought the agency to a crucial turning point. "Either we're going to become truly multiple use for all American people," Jamison says, "or we're in deep trouble."

Never underestimate the desert

To travelers making the long haul between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, the Mojave Desert often seems, at least at first, like a lot of bleak mileage to blaze through with the windows up and the air-conditioning turned to max. The coarse, rubbly soil supports small gray fists of saltbush and wiry, waist-high creosote which, in full flower, achieves the color of overcooked broccoli. But it is easy to underestimate the desert. An 11,700-year-old ring of creosote bushes on BLM land is the world's oldest living thing. Above 4,000 feet, Joshua trees appear. The shaggy bark on their upraised branches makes them look like the limbs of some furry animal petitioning the heavens for relief. Parallel rows of humpbacked mountains shoulder together through the distant haze, and at Cima Dome the earth swells up like rising dough around their flanks. Elsewhere, sandy dry lakes and black beds of lava intervene. The desert tortoise, the kangaroo rat, the kit fox, the coyote, the sidewinder, the bighorn sheep, all live here.

The California desert last year produced more than $1.3 billion worth of nonfuel minerals, including gold, rare earths and borax, and most of this output came from the 12.1 million acres administered by the BLM. BLM land here also accommodates up to 40,000 sheep for seasonal grazing and roughly 15,000 cattle year-round. Millions of visitors come here each year, many from Los Angeles, which is only a two-hour drive away, and many of them bring dune buggies, dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles (ORVs). BLM land provides corridors for train service, and utilities use it to carry gas, water, electricity and telephone communications.

Environmentalists say the BLM has managed these competing uses woefully, routinely sacrificing desert wildlife and scenery to benefit miners, ranchers and

ORV enthusiasts. Horror stories abound. One critic comments drily that labeling an area both a "crucial tortoise habitat" and an ORV "freeplay area" is what the agency means by multiple use. Some members of Congress are convinced the only solution is a Park Service rescue, which is what the proposed California Desert Protection Act represents. It would make 1.5 million acres of BLM land the Mojave National Park and would appropriate additional BLM territory in order to turn the Death Valley and Joshua Tree national monuments into national parks. But that's not all. It would also designate another 4.4 million acres of BLM desert as protected wilderness.

Peter Burk, a tall, bearded, somewhat ungainly high school librarian from Barstow, is an ardent advocate of this approach. Driving out one Sunday into the eastern Mojave, he characterizes BLM management of the desert as a history of supposedly protective acronyms signifying little. By way of example, he drives a visitor up into Clark Mountain, parts of which the BLM has designated a National Scenic Area (NSA), a Wilderness Study Area (WSA), an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Class L (limited use) land.

The WSA, on the high ground, shelters California's fourth-largest herd of bighorn sheep, but they must compete on the lower slopes and at the springs with scrawny cattle, which graze here under a BLM permit. Burk argues that subsidizing low-cost grazing on such precious habitat makes no sense. In the desert, it can take up to 500 acres to feed one cow, which will eat in a day the forage that might otherwise sustain a desert tortoise for a year. The Clark Mountain habitat was also threatened a few years ago, Burk says, when an Australian firm applied for a road through the WSA to reopen an old mining claim. He says only pressure from environmentalists got the road rerouted.

Whatever happened to those trees?

Hugh Riecken, who runs day-to-day business for the BLM desert district, disagrees. He says the agency deserves the credit, and notes that it also got the mining company to plant cottonwood trees in the WSA as a form of environmental mitigation. He adds, with chagrin, that the cattle promptly ate the cottonwoods.

The new road now bypasses the WSA but leads directly into the ACEC, which includes some of the richest wildlife habitat in the California desert and a number of rare plant species, as well. The Australian company's 450-acre mining operation, now under Canadian ownership, opened here two years ago and employs the latest technology to extract 70,000 ounces of gold annually. To the right of the road, huge machines grind up the area of critical environmental concern into a rocky pulp and feed it into a system of drums and tanks, where a cyanide solution leaches out the gold. To the left, below the road, is a large settling pond, half-filled with green liquid and crusted with white on the exposed shallows. Burk stops by a sign that declares, "WARNING—This Area Contains Chemicals Known to the State of California to Cause Cancer or Birth Defects."

To the BLM, Clark Mountain is a model of multiple-use management. To Burk, the disregard for natural resources, in a BLM district that is better funded and politically more sensitive than most, is a characteristic travesty of "multiple abuse." "The BLM has been saying it needs more money for about five years," he says. "I believe if you gave them more money they'd spend it on more ORV races, grazing and mining."

Underfunded and stretched too thin

But Riecken argues that adequate funding would make all the difference. "You know what the Park Service gets to manage its land? About $10 an acre." The BLM's budget for WSAs in the desert works out to 10 *cents* an acre, he says. "How the hell do you manage WSAs on 10 cents an acre and do it right? I only get 65 cents an acre to do everything." His staff was stretched so thin at one point that a single range conservationist was responsible for grazing allotments covering three million acres. He has six geologists to oversee 56,000 mining claims, including more than a thousand with current plans of operation. The press of paperwork means staffers get to spend little time in the field. Monitoring suffers, and mining companies routinely hire their own consultants to prepare environmental assessments, which after a period of review can become official BLM documents. Burk says these circumstances routinely oblige the BLM staff to capitulate to the demands of traditional users. Riecken disagrees, but budgetary realities plainly frustrate him.

Outdated laws also frustrate sound management on BLM land, and Riecken, a lean, easygoing man who headed the BLM's wilderness staff in Washington, D.C. until Burford began to make his mark, is surprisingly forthright about this. He suggests that the low grazing fees beloved by ranchers—and written into law by their Congressional allies—are overdue for change. (The federal government now charges $1.81 per animal unit month, the standard grazing measure; $8.70 is the going rate on private land.) Rather than contributing to the U.S. Treasury, the fees now cover only approximately half what he must spend to manage his entire grazing program. Told that Burk has called the current system "cowboy welfare," he laughs and remarks, "You could characterize it that way. If we charged these guys out here the going market rate, they'd probably all go out of business."

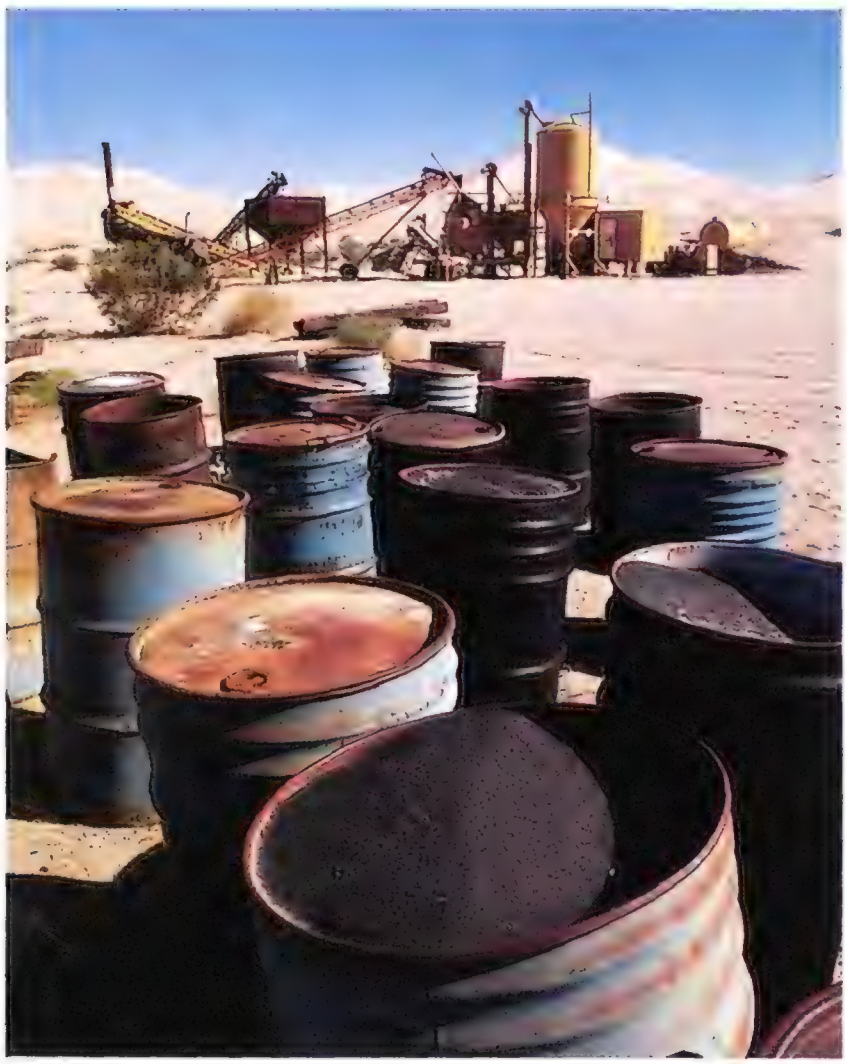
Miners benefit even more lavishly from an outdated law, the Mining Law of 1872, which Riecken characterizes flatly as a "giveaway." The mining companies argue that the high-risk, capital-intensive nature of their business necessitates the law's incentives, including the right to stake a claim on public lands and extract gold without payment. But Riecken points out that companies drilling for oil and gas, another dicey enterprise, pay a 12.5-percent royalty. "I also know that one mining company's break-even point is $158 an ounce. And what's the price of gold now—$370?" He begins to run the numbers through his head—that margin of profit times the 400,000 ounces of gold to be produced in his district this year. "And then when they're done, they can buy the land at $2.50 an acre. Not that the land's going to be worth a helluva lot when they get through with it."

Or maybe it will be. As in the old land-office days, the Mining Law of 1872 still offers splendid opportunities for speculation. In 1983, a company patented 310 acres in a resort area outside Las Vegas, ostensibly for sand and gravel mining. It paid a total of $775 for land the BLM later appraised at $1.24 million.

Riecken suggests that a modest royalty might at the very least enable him to enforce the law adequately. It could also do much more than that: the National Wildlife Federation calculates that, by failing to charge miners an 8-percent royalty, the federal government gave up $170 million in revenues from gold produced on public lands in 1988. The giveway makes even less sense, Riecken suggests, because 70 percent of the gold operations in his district, including most of the largest mines, are foreign-owned.

Riecken drives a visitor out to Kelso Dunes, a WSA where the sand has drifted up over time to a height of 600 feet above the desert floor. From a distance, with their pale golden flanks and sinuous ridges, the dunes seem to lie like a nude against the hazy gray shape of the Granite Mountains. The agency classes the dunes as an Outstanding Natural Area, and Riecken says it has protected them from ORV traffic since the 1970s (though cattle grazing nearby sometimes invade an area that the BLM has designated an Unusual Plant Assemblage). Now a miner with 217 claims dating from the 1950s wants to shovel up the dunes and run them through a trommel to separate out the black sand, or magnetite. After further processing he plans to ship the sand to Europe, where a new, and still disputed, process may make it possible to recover microscopic gold in commercial quantities.

"I'd hate to see him roll these babies over," says Riecken, as he walks up the dunes. A lizard skitters across in front of him. Its dimpled footprints and the line left by the flicking of its tail look like musical notations in the sand. The reclamation plan, says Riecken, is simply to dump the unwanted sand back in place and let the wind do its work, on the theory that if you'd never seen it before you wouldn't know the difference. "I don't buy that," he says. But he adds that if the disputed process turns out to be legitimate and



District administrator Hugh Riecken defends the BLM's oversight but not "giveaway" inherent in mining law.

At Kelso Dunes in the Mojave Desert, sand containing traces of gold awaits shipment to a processing plant.

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AMERICAN EAGLE OUTFITTERS

NATURAL SELECTION

Peter Burk, a California environmentalist, believes some BLM lands should be taken over by Park Service.

Cowboy rides herd on federal land in Nevada. Though grazing fees remain low, many ranchers detest BLM.

the miner's claims are valid, the BLM is powerless under the Mining Law of 1872 to stop him.

The Sierra Club's Debbie Sease is thinking of laws like this when she says that Cy Jamison is a better director than she expected—but not good enough to turn the BLM around. He may hire more biologists, build new fish ladders and begin to cultivate a new constituency through programs celebrating "Watchable Wildlife" and "Backcountry Byways." But she argues that such efforts are just another case of "looking for the politically cheap good thing to do on the environment." Jamison, she says, is unlikely to make tough decisions against old allies in livestock and mining. Indeed, critics suggest that Jamison may already be backing off his pledge to take the heat on controversial decisions. In May, Chuck Neal, a retired BLM employee in Wyoming, had his $4,000 consulting contract terminated one week after he was quoted as saying politics weigh too heavily in some BLM decisions. The state BLM office attributed the firing to a tight budget, but a rebellious staffer in charge of the budget publicly refuted this, and Neal said he was fired because he had angered powerful ranchers by opposing use of a cyanide device to kill coyotes. Jamison supported his termination.

Controversy over the spotted owl

Jamison came under criticism again during the summer, after the spotted owl was listed as a threatened species. Despite longstanding recommendations by its own biologists that logging in some Northwest districts be reduced by as much as 50 percent to protect the owl, the BLM proposed a reduction of only 16 to 21 percent, taking the lead in an Administration effort environmentalists say was aimed primarily at protecting jobs rather than owls.

Finally, Jamison went on record supporting the existing grazing law and the Mining Law of 1872 but did not rule out some modifications. These are part of the Western credo. It would be political suicide for a BLM director to attack them. The question is whether Jamison can mollify environmentalists by merely tinkering with them. At a Senate committee hearing this spring, for example, he announced that he intended to make reclamation bonds mandatory for mines on BLM land. Senator Dale Bumpers of Arkansas peered over his reading glasses, unmollified, and addressed a larger question. "Mr. Jamison," he inquired, in a tone of great reasonableness, "if you owned 500 acres of land would you let someone come onto your property and mine it for free?"

Jamison's tinkering is more likely to be persuasive when it comes to the way ranchers run cattle on BLM land. He has already won plaudits by launching a

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Environmentalist Patricia Honeycutt and rancher Doc Hatfield have joined forces to restore public land.

major effort to restore one slice of the range—the wetlands and riparian areas where cattle and wildlife alike tend to congregate.

The BLM's "guru of grass," Wayne Elmore, stands 6 feet 4 and weighs 258 pounds, counting his full, grizzled beard and the tuck of Copenhagen behind his lower lip. Hired as a wildlife biologist, he started fencing cattle out of riparian zones around Prineville, Oregon, in the mid-'70s and wore himself out trying to persuade outraged ranchers that this was a good thing. One of them tried to beat him up and, failing that, tried to get him fired. Another, having heard Elmore's sermon about how the riparian zone harbored four-fifths of the area's wildlife, said, "Well, Wayne, that's real nice, but I just don't love wildlife near as much as you do." It finally dawned on Elmore that he was gaining more enemies than converts. So he began to look at riparian improvement to see what might be in it for the ranchers.

"This is what you call poor condition," says Elmore, driving out one day through a river valley in eastern Oregon. "When Peter Skene Ogden came here in 1825, he talked about willow from side to side across the bottom." Now cattle have trampled the riverbanks into a hoofprint quagmire and chewed the vegetation for a hundred yards on either side down to a grassy stubble. There is no willow in sight.

The riparian zone constitutes just 2 percent of the land base, Elmore says. But because ranchers tend to let their cattle congregate there year-round, it winds up providing 80 percent of the forage. Elmore's original idea of using fenced "exclosures" to get the cattle out of the riparian zone and onto the uplands worked spectacularly. In his before-and-after pictures, typically taken ten years apart, the denuded banks and the wide puddlelike streams transform themselves. Lush perennial grasses spring up, and the puddles deepen into narrow, sinuous streams.

What Elmore also began to notice was that there *wasn't* any dramatic difference between his exclosures and unfenced stream banks where cattle grazed only in winter, or for short periods, rather than all summer long. Consequently, Elmore began to experiment with grazing systems, and now a system of exclosures (during the recovery period) and managed grazing (in later years) is the basis of the BLM's national restoration program, which aims to drastically improve 75 percent of the riparian areas by 1997.

Elmore takes a visitor to a section of Camp Creek, where a recovery program has been under way for 25 years. Doc Hatfield, a local rancher, and Patricia Honeycutt, a Portland environmentalist, are along for the walk (left). "I heard Wayne's talk for five years," Hatfield remarks, as he picks his way up the creek bottom. "I could've recited it word for word. I was just like somebody who goes to church and never gets the meaning. I never understood till I came here and walked on this." He lets the heel of his cowboy boot squish into the muck by way of emphasis. "Because you can feel what it's doing."

What intermittent grazing accomplishes

Nebraska sedge, untrampled by cattle, now crowds the narrow channel of the creek. Rushes creep out into the water. The sedge holds the soil with 6,000 feet of roots in every four-inch cube of soil. Its coarse foliage filters sediment, which has accumulated to a depth of 6 feet since the days when this was an overgrazed, washed-out gut. Now, Elmore says, the accumulated sediment acts as a sponge to hold the infrequent rains and recharge the aquifer. For the first time in perhaps 100 years, the creek runs year-round, providing water for ranchers who are careful enough to manage the land properly. The riparian zone has widened, and the vegetation for intermittent grazing far outweighs what cattle could glean from stubble in the old days.

Wildlife also thrives. One such restoration, in Wyoming, yielded a 377-percent increase in the trout popu-

lation, and another created one of the best trout fisheries in southwestern Montana. Some environmentalists still believe complete exclosure would be a better way to benefit elk and other land animals, but as a compromise, the BLM program seems to be one in which everyone benefits. It remains to be seen whether, under Jamison, it becomes a more generally accepted practice.

Out in Camp Creek, Doc Hatfield and Patricia Honeycutt, old adversaries, stand opposite each other on the spongy sediment. She wears a loose, peach-colored sweater and a neon pink Snowbasin cap. He wears a cowboy hat and has a quick, white grin set off by weathered flesh. There is an amiable flirtatiousness between them. She started out aiming to get cattle off the public lands. He joined her group, the Izaak Walton League, to find out who they were and stop them. They managed to talk instead of suing each other, and Hatfield now says, "I saw a lot of what the environmentalists were getting at, and they saw that it was livestock management, not livestock, that was the problem." These days they work together, with Honeycutt organizing volunteer teams to undertake restorations on BLM land throughout the West.

The best hope for the public lands clearly lies in this kind of grass-roots cooperation. Pressure for more such efforts is likely to increase as this heretofore secret domain of ranchers and miners wins a new and much larger constituency among the general public. Jamison's role in a changing BLM might thus be likened to that of Gorbachev managing the Soviet transition to democracy. At first, everyone wondered if the promised change in direction was for real. Then it dawned on them that, regardless of Jamison's true convictions, he had given them an opening and they had better grab it. It remains to be seen if he will have the stamina to weed out bureaucrats who remain committed only to the interests of traditional users. It remains to be seen whether he has the vision to persuade mining companies and ranchers of the long-term benefits in behaving like environmentalists. But even if he doesn't, the public lands have been opened irrevocably to new thinking, and Jamison's hardest job may be to stay in front as the world changes around him.

Trucks travel road to tailings site near a gold mine located on BLM land in Nevada. Owned by a British firm, mine uses cyanide to leach metal from earth chewed out of a mountain like those in the background.

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By Bennett Schiff

From the Midlands, a unique master of light and color

The drama of Joseph Wright of Derby was not in his own life but in his portrayal of the exceptional times in which he lived

Something fairly certain about the artist Joseph Wright of Derby is that they will never make a Hollywood movie of his life.

His is almost an odd story in the annals of art as they are commonly revealed. It contravenes the romantic convention generally attached to the lives of artists, the one that speaks, on and on, of suffering, of lack of appreciation by the public, of high living and low prices, if any at all.

Unlike so many notable artists of history, the drama of Joseph Wright was not in his life but in his art. Personally, he was one of the mildest and most ordinary of men, the very essence of an 18th-century Midlands Englishman of his time and of his class, which was solid middle. Sir William S. Gilbert, of Gilbert and Sullivan, made the case in the *Pirates of Penzance*: "For he might have been a Roosian, a French or Turk or Proosian, . . . He remains an Englishman." Not an artist-type at all. But very much an artist.

As an artist, you could say he led a charmed life. He set out from the beginning to be a painter, was supported by his father (after surprisingly little fuss), went to a master to learn his ABC's, found a ready market and, for the rest of his life, until his death at 62 in 1789, sold pictures to an appreciative clientele.

In an age when Captain Cook was charting the coasts of New Zealand and Australia, and the intrepid English were everywhere that was hot and freezing and difficult in the world, Joseph Wright worked briefly in Liverpool, made one trip to Italy, had a look at

Derby Museum and Art Gallery

Lecturer (center) demonstrates wonders of science to intrigued townspeople in Wright's *The Orrery* (1766).

Portable planetarium, orrery shows movement of planets around sun. Lecturer resembles Isaac Newton.

Inventive man from the Midlands

National Portrait Gallery, London

Self-Portrait at the age of about Fifty is one of a series that the artist painted. He died at 62.

London, made a stab at Bath, then resumed residence in his birthplace and lived there until he died. He was a faithful husband to one wife, a cherishing father, an endearing friend and a convivial fellow—except for those periods later in life when he was to suffer from depression. It makes an unusual, if not dramatic, story for one of his profession.

But it is worth knowing about because his work, not at all that well known except to students of the place and time, is significant, innovative and even startling for when and where it was done. He painted portraits (the main stock-in-trade of any sound 18th-century English painter), landscapes, blazing firework displays of Rome, moody grottoes and Vesuvius in eruption, and he painted all of these very well.

What made him unique in his country at the time was his painting of light. We don't know if he knew the work of the other masters of dramatic, operatic light—the Frenchman Georges de La Tour or the Italian master Caravaggio or a number of Dutch painters similarly involved—but Joseph Wright of Derby was compelling in his own distinct way.

After his death he fell from the public eye, which is the way, in art, things often transpire. Until Benedict Nicolson's masterful two-volume work on Wright was published in 1968 (in a small edition long out of print), there was hardly anything you could find on Wright other than a mention in the standard histories.

All this has been put to right by an exhibition of his work, the largest so far mounted, which is remarkable for its comprehensiveness, its catholicity and the meticulous scholarship with which it has been put together, the work of the distinguished historian of 18th-century English art, Judy Egerton. The catalog that accompanies the show, along with Nicolson's magisterial volumes, resurrects—and for very good reasons—Wright's position in the history of English art. The exhibition, which opened at London's Tate Gallery and went on to the Grand Palais in Paris, will be on view at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from September 7 through December 2.

It is perhaps understandable that Wright was dropped from the forefront of English art history where, we now know, he belongs. It was the age, after all, of Reynolds and Gainsborough. Turner and Constable were hard on their heels. It was the age of London and Joseph Wright was of Derby. He had studied in London with Thomas Hudson, a well-known artist and atelier teacher, and he showed in London prominently, but he never wanted to live there. He was not one of those who subscribed to Dr. Johnson's famous dictum that a man who was tired of London was tired of life. Wright of Derby he was and Wright of Derby he remained.

He was born in 1734, in an age of unusual vitality, invention and scholarship. It was the age of the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution was by then a mounting rumble in the land. Wright had the lucidity of mind, the sense of intense involvement and the stubbornness that characterized the time.

Narodni Gallery, Prague

Peter Perez Burdett and his first wife Hannah (1765) was a gift to the sitters. Burdett, a cartographer, holds a telescope. One of Wright's good friends, he is thought to be the figure taking notes in *The Orrery.*

He was the son and the grandson of attorneys. One brother was also an attorney, another, a doctor. There were two sisters. At Derby Grammar School he was not precocious, not difficult, not a radical or a renegade. But he knew he wanted to be an artist. In 1751, after some mild objection from his father, John (nicknamed "Equity"), who suggested he be an attorney like himself, Joseph went to London to study with Hudson for two years. (He was to return to Hudson in 1756 for an additional 15 months, smoothing out the rough spots he felt his work had at the time.)

Hudson's studio was a busy workplace at the center of London's portrait business, a buzzing trade and one in which apprentice students functioned almost as factory hands in a production line. They learned as they went along, working on certain aspects of their master's work, such as drapery, landscape bits or classical motifs, columns and friezes, for the backgrounds of portraits. It was very much the thing then to have your portrait painted, and Wright set out to be a painter the way a student today might go about preparing to be a doctor or geographer. He worked very hard and was blessed with great natural gifts. His fluency, in time, became remarkable. He could paint marvelous images of bark, and leather—as of a blacksmith's apron, so thick and pliant you could feel it; of rocks, moving water, leaves, silk and satin and velvet, clouds, atmosphere, the very air itself, a breeze on a summer's day, a rainbow arching over the dales of Derbyshire.

Late in life Wright would discover the Lake District of Westmorland and Cumberland and would write of "Mountains piled on mountains & toss'd together in wilder form, than imagination can paint or pen describe—To have done these tremendous scenes any justice, I sh^{d} have visited them twenty years ago. . . ."

Some 20 years earlier he had been in Italy, expressing the same kind of wonder. Arriving in Rome in 1774 with his bride, Ann Swift, he was deeply affected by "the amazing and stupendous remains of antiquity" as well as by the many other attractions of the country.

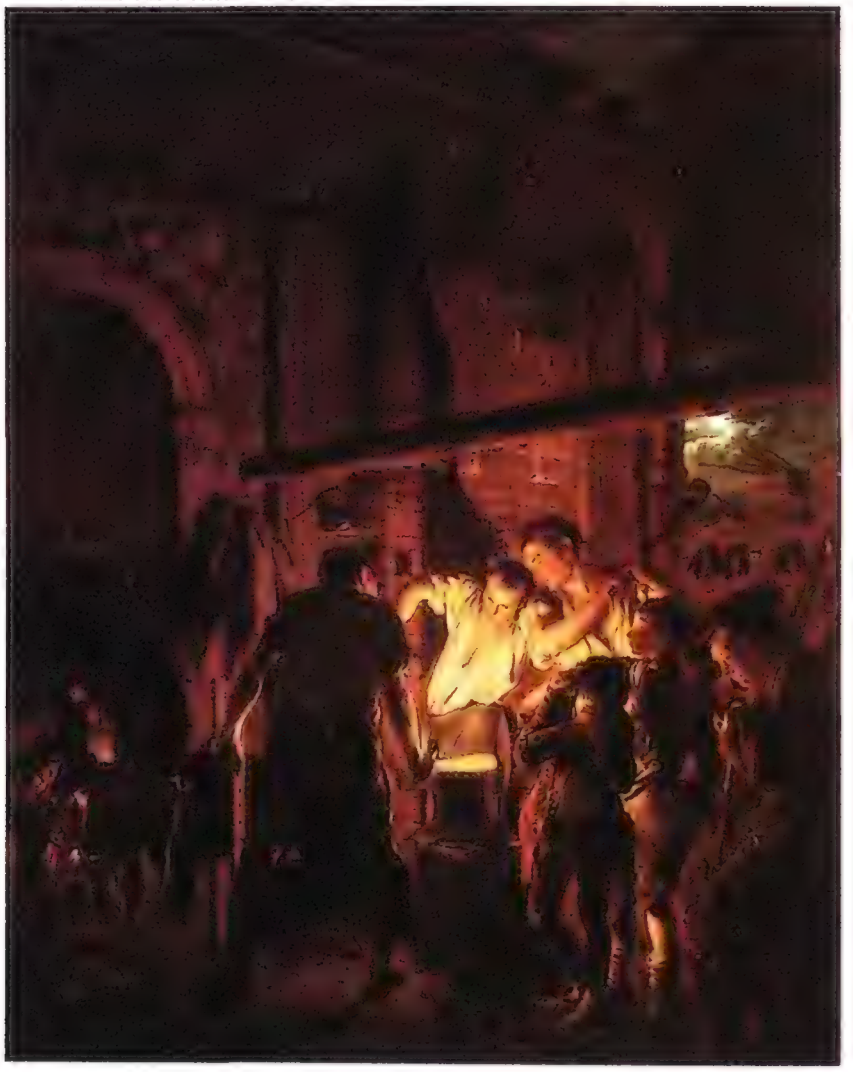
The marriage seems to have encountered some family objection. His niece, Hannah Wright, left a memoir

Bennett Schiff, who is a member of SMITHSONIAN*'s Board of Editors, wrote most recently about the Daimyo treasures of Japan, in November 1988.*

National Gallery, London

An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump, like orrery painting, deals with era's science lectures for laymen; this talk is a shocker, as the reactions show. Bird is deprived of air to demonstrate the principle of a vacuum.

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven



Intense glare of hot iron lights *A Blacksmith's Shop*. Such paintings appealed especially to the wealthy.

Private collection

Among day's richest men, Sir Richard Arkwright made a fortune from cotton-spinning rollers (to his left).

of him that, aside from letters, remains almost the only near-contemporary source of information on Wright. Hannah wrote snobbishly of Ann, blaming her for holding her uncle back. You like to think that Wright might have mildly inquired, "Back from where?" In any event, he was a devoted husband. The couple had six children, three of whom died early in life.

He was a patient, indulgent father, a model family man. Hannah Wright's memoir says that "there was not any part of the house in which they [the children] might not play, even in the room where the Pictures were arranged all round & upon the floor. Mr. Wright allowed them to play whip tops in his Painting Room, when he was not employed. . . ."

By the time the newlyweds left for Italy, Wright was already an artist in full command of his powers. What he got in Italy was an ideal confrontation with past glories and stimulating new sights and experiences, a rich storehouse of concepts and images that he would regenerate in his work for the rest of his life. These included the high-tension Roman firework festivals ("The Romans seem to me all going mad," he wrote home to placid Derby); the otherworldly sight of Vesuvius acting up ("the most wonderful sight in nature"); fantastic sea grottoes on the Gulf of Salerno near Naples (pp. 56-57), and the clear light and soft skies of the Italian land, which gave him an entirely new way of painting landscapes.

Scientific marvels by candlelight

Over the years, when people said "Joseph Wright of Derby," two paintings came mainly to mind and these he had done in Derby, that Midlands town, before he saw Italy. They are the lunar stars of his so-called candlelight pictures: *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in place of the Sun*, 1766, and *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768. (The paintings are frequently referred to as *The Orrery* and *The Air Pump*.) Such paintings were without precedent in England, and no one can say with any assurance exactly where Wright derived his inspiration. Nicolson establishes that Wright was acquainted with the work of Thomas Frye, a contemporary Irish artist, and that he had seen a series of mezzotint portraits by him. These, Nicolson says, "opened his eyes to the real world," including a way of using light and shadow. But whatever his sources, nowhere is his clarity more evident than in these two major paintings of English art. As Nicolson says, "a beautiful lucidity informs everything Wright did."

Wright's interest in science was not that unusual for an educated man of the time. He had several friends and patrons among the members of the Lunar Society, which began to take shape around 1764-65 when he was about 30 years old and already an established portrait painter in Derby. Any aspect of contemporary science—chemistry, magnetics, medicine—was fair game at the society's monthly meetings (customarily held on the Monday nearest the full moon). There were many prominent men attending, such as the great potter Josiah Wedgwood and Dr. Erasmus Darwin, the noted polymath, and Wright rubbed shoulders with them. It was typical of the Lunar Society that one member, a Mr. Bage, should have owned a paper mill, been a disciple of Rousseau and written several novels—all in the course of events at the time.

There was a nice precedent for such societies, the most prominent being the Royal Society, in which people like Newton (of the apple), Halley (of the comet), Dryden (of the poems) and Pepys (of the diary) would meet and talk about gravity, comets, scientific instruments, and even poetry and art.

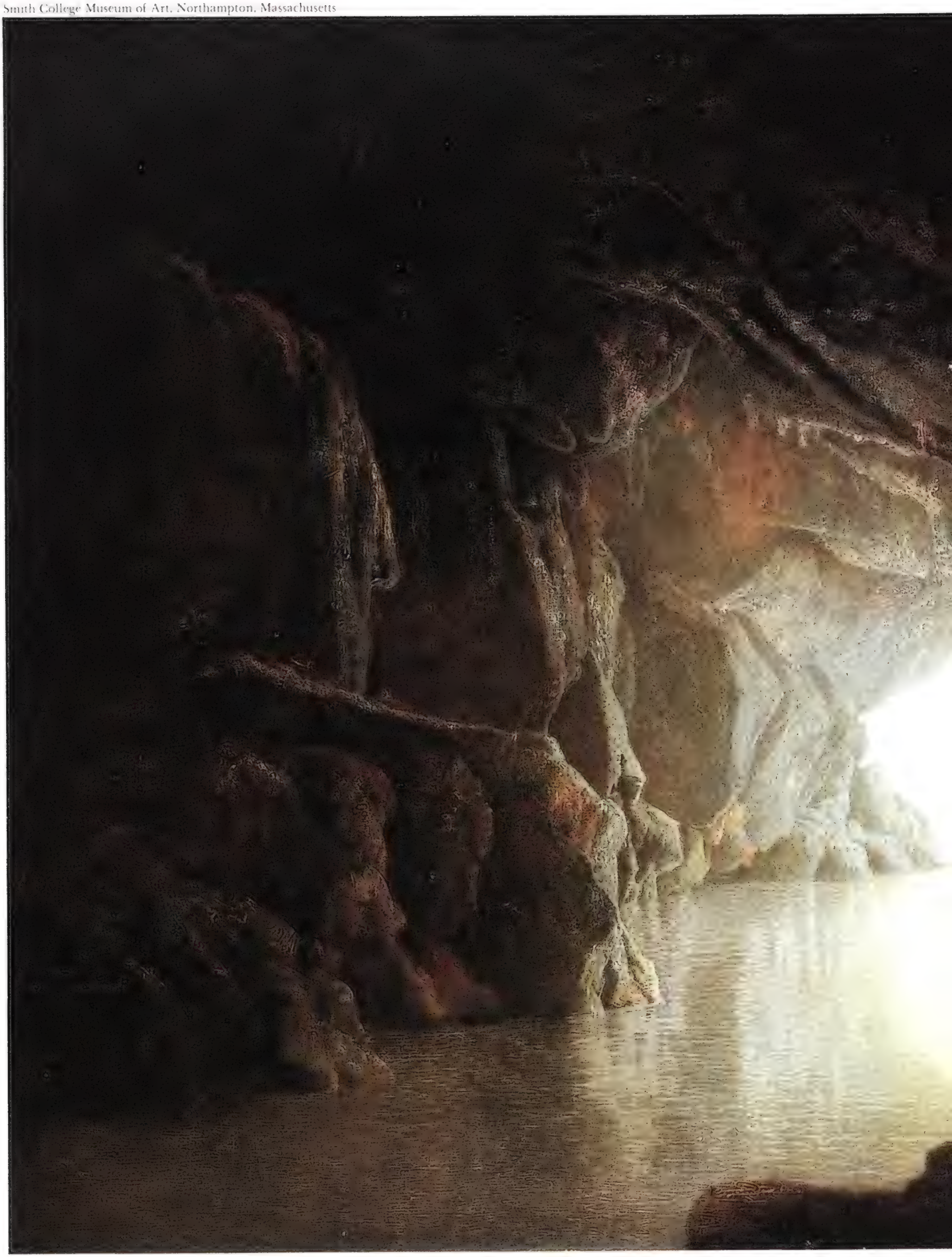
A record of lucidity, wonder and awe

"The interests of the Lunar Society," writes David Fraser, head of the Derby Museum and Gallery, which has a notable collection of Wright's work, "represent a microcosm of that European movement of the 17th and 18th centuries known as the Enlightenment, whose radical developments in scientific, religious, intellectual, philosophical and literary thought and practice transformed Man's view of himself, of his role in the universal order, and of God." The spirit of the times was one of lucidity, wonder and awe. You can see this clearly in these immensely dramatic paintings.

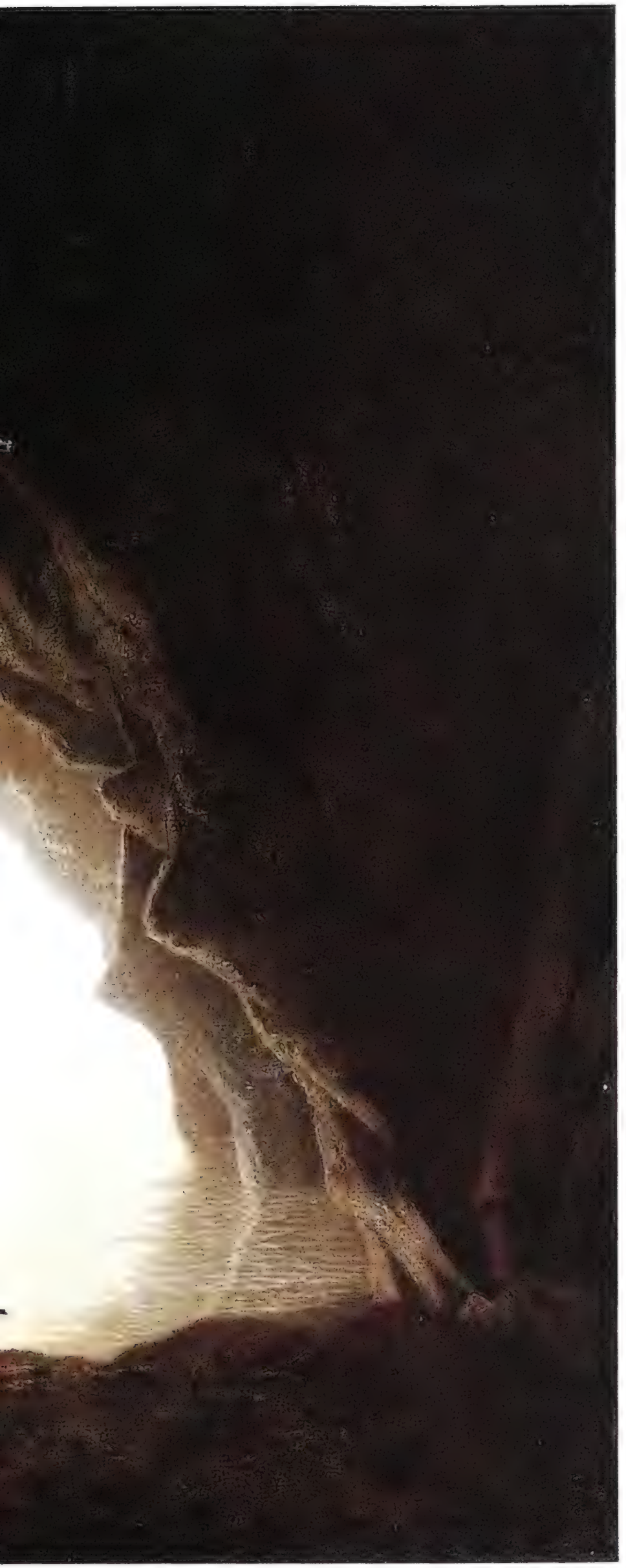
The orrery, a machine named after the 4th Earl of Orrery, was in effect a small, portable planetarium. It had been invented, toward the end of the 17th century, to show the movements of the planets around the sun during the course of a year. It was operated by turning a handle to set the planets in motion with a clockwork mechanism. By the mid-18th century, orreries helped make Newton's theories, especially that of universal gravitation, accessible to the general public, presenting a universe of harmony and predictable order, in which the "music of the spheres" could be heard. It was the custom for traveling lecturers to demonstrate the orrery and expatiate on the natural world and the wonders of science. These lecturers were not carnival spielers but authentic scholars, scientists, natural philosophers and authors.

To compose pictures of scientific demonstrations, to present with meticulous accuracy the apparatus being used, and to render the complex situations as affected by a single light source was unique in Britain. *The Orrery* is not only dramatically luminous; there is something serene and beneficent about it, a feeling of love for creative knowledge.

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts



A Cavern, Evening (1774) was based on a drawing made during a visit to the Gulf of Salerno. Painting



combines romantic vision of a cave in iridescent sea with precise observations of color and form of rocks.

The Air Pump (p. 54) is something else again. It was shown two years after *The Orrery* and displays the same technical mastery and eye for drama. But here science, in its voracious pursuit of the possible, has taken a machine and, for the sheer sake of showing what it is capable of, is torturing a living creature. The air pump, invented in 1650, was used to show the effect of a near-vacuum on life and matter; it sucked air out of a container. In Wright's painting, a live bird has been placed in a jar, and the ghastly process is taking place as the bird is brought to the point of suffocation. A figure at the lower right, a man with head bowed in what seems to be sad contemplation, is a wonderful portrait in itself. Children draw back in horror and the demonstrator seems to be an emaciated wizard. At left, a young man and woman make a sort of double portrait, having little to do with the action but very much a part of the formal design. Light from an unknown source rises from the exact lower center and both underlights and highlights the faces.

Benedict Nicolson, viewing the sheltering arm of the man around the girl, assumes that the bird will be revived. Perhaps he is right. In any event, he says that the work, if cleaned, would emerge as "one of the triumphs of the eighteenth century." It has been cleaned and it is.

On the trail of Wright's people

In the small towns and villages of the north Midlands countryside, if you are on the trail of Joseph Wright you can't do any better than to sit down to dinner with a lineal descendant of someone he had painted some 200 years earlier. England being what it still is, in places, it is possible with the proper introduction, to do just that. In such gatherings 200 years of English history are suddenly collapsed into immediacy. Here are the people Wright painted; the connection is uninterrupted.

Nor are such people confined to the Midlands. There is no better place than the Tate Gallery in London in which to observe the English as they observe themselves. England is, after all, Shakespeare's country; theater is everywhere. Looking at the works it often enough appears that the spectators are not so much looking at paintings as they are looking into mirrors.

Wright's portraits are, above all, of people; they are alive within the canvas. They look you right in the eye, saying, Here I am; I know who I am; who are you? He could paint a wealthy sitter as the sitter would like to be seen, and come up with the "noble" or "heroic" or "classical" figure. But when a middle-class person—a physician, country squire, clergyman or mill owner, or the wife or child of any of these—was painted as he or she was, the work was uncom-

Private collection

Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night dramatizes new age with glowing mills set in a moonlit landscape.

promising and suffused with the character of the sitter.

He did a series of self-portraits: the first, at around age 20, is of a somewhat stiff, vaguely Elizabethan figure with a luminous, inquiring eye, a flushed porcelain complexion and a courtier's costume: sash, lace collar, crimson cloak—à la Rembrandt in surface, if not in depth. With a later one, at about age 50, the rendering of the trappings is far subordinate to the penetrating depiction of the visage of the man.

On his return from Italy, Wright began to sell paintings to local landowners, intellectuals, industrialists, mill owners. A number were self-made men, rising industrialists in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution. Among them was Richard Arkwright, who began as a barber, improved the machinery for cotton manufacture, went on to build mills run by waterpower (a turning point in industrial history) and became one of the richest men in England.

Mills, the great centers of industrial employment of the time, operated day and night, lit with candles placed side by side with hundreds of highly flammable spinning machines. Fires were common. The plants were often several stories high and employed great numbers of children. (The minimum age for a child to work in a factory, 10, was not established until 1883.)

The Scotsman James Watt had developed the first practical steam engine in 1765. In 1781 he followed this with the rotative engine, which turned shafts that drove complicated machinery and so changed the world. Individually manned workshops were replaced by factories, and the Industrial Revolution gathered a full head of steam. The rumble had now become a tremendous roar.

All of this fitted in nicely with Wright's interest in artificial and natural light and shadow. He painted iron forges at night, blacksmiths' shops and industrial workshops. In the smithies and forges, American scholar Robert Rosenblum has observed, Wright discovered a "most extraordinary light source, the blinding white glare of a newly forged iron bar."

The aristocracy was interested in Wright's "men at work" scenes. He sold one of his "blacksmith's shop" paintings to Lord Melbourne, his first iron forge painting to Lord Palmerston and his second to Catherine II of Russia, all of which probably reflected more of an interest in industry and technology than in art.

Wright's painting *Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night* (left) is one of England's most calmly powerful landscapes. By intention or otherwise, the juxtaposition of dark, bulky land against a white cloud mass and a pale blue sky, lit by a white moon, creates a series of abstract shapes that center the glow of the mill. It makes a striking landscape, a balanced movement of forces, which later came to be known as "significant form." And it is here that Blake's "dark, satanic mills" in "England's green and pleasant land" arrive.

Wright was a complaisant man and, aside from being normally outraged at how his work was hung at Royal Academy shows, seemed wholly without artistic temperament. He had, for example, painted a picture for Josiah Wedgwood, based on a story from Pliny about the daughter of a potter. Wedgwood objected to *The Corinthian Maid* because "the naked appears too much thro' the drapery." Wright replied that this was a result of her actions, and that the "drapery clings to the limbs but it is not on that account less Graecian." The ladies had objected, Wedgwood wrote, to the "division of the posteriors appearing too plain through the drapery and to its Sticking so close. . . ." Wright covered up the offending sections.

"Derby is full of curiosities"

He became known. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge came to Derby in 1796 and counted Wright among the sights of the town. "Derby is full of curiosities," he wrote to a friend, "the cotton, the silk mills, Wright, the painter, and Dr. Darwin, the everything, except the Christian." Darwin, grandfather of naturalist Charles Darwin, became Wright's physician. Rationalist, poet, doctor, inventor, philosopher, he stood out even in an extraordinary age.

Ann Wright died of consumption in 1790. Wright continued to paint until about 1796 or '97. He became asthmatic and nervous. "He could not sleep in a high wind, lest the chimnies should be blow down and fall upon them," Hannah Wright's memoir relates.

He had suffered from severe cyclical depression and

general ill health for many years. In a letter to a friend in 1783, he referred to months of "torpor" during which he could not paint. To his friend the poet William Hayley he wrote in August 1783, "I have now dragged over four months, without feeling a wish to take up my pencil. . . ." In the same letter Wright noted that his "ill health" had gone on for "sixteen years past," which means that the depressions had begun as far back as 1767, a time when his work was being widely acclaimed.

He became a worrying sort of man. He worried about his health, about his reputation, but not, it seems, about money. He sold well and inherited from his father an income of about £100 a year, a comfortable sum in those days. Friends reported "He kept a handsome table," entertained them well and left £10,000 to £12,000 when he died, in those days a fortune.

In December 1794 Wright paid a visit to his old friend Thomas Gisborne at Yoxall Lodge, a rambling country house in the middle of Needwood Forest. The weather was inclement; Wright wrapped himself up in flannel. "I thought myself invulnerable," he wrote; "unfortunately for me it proved otherwise. I have been dreadfully ill ever since." He never fully recovered and for the remaining two and a half years of his life he sank steadily. He died on August 29, 1797, a few days shy of his 63d birthday.

The year of Wright's death, J.M.W. Turner painted *Moonlight, a study at Millbank*. Millbank is where the Tate Gallery now stands and where Wright's show was held last February. *Moonlight* is the kind of night landscape, you think, that Wright, himself the author of many strangely magical nightscapes, would have admired. Moody, misty, English.

"The Romans seem to me all going mad," wrote the man from the Midlands after seeing fireworks display at the Castle of St. Angelo. In Rome, newly wed, Wright was awed by the city's treasures of antiquity.

National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool

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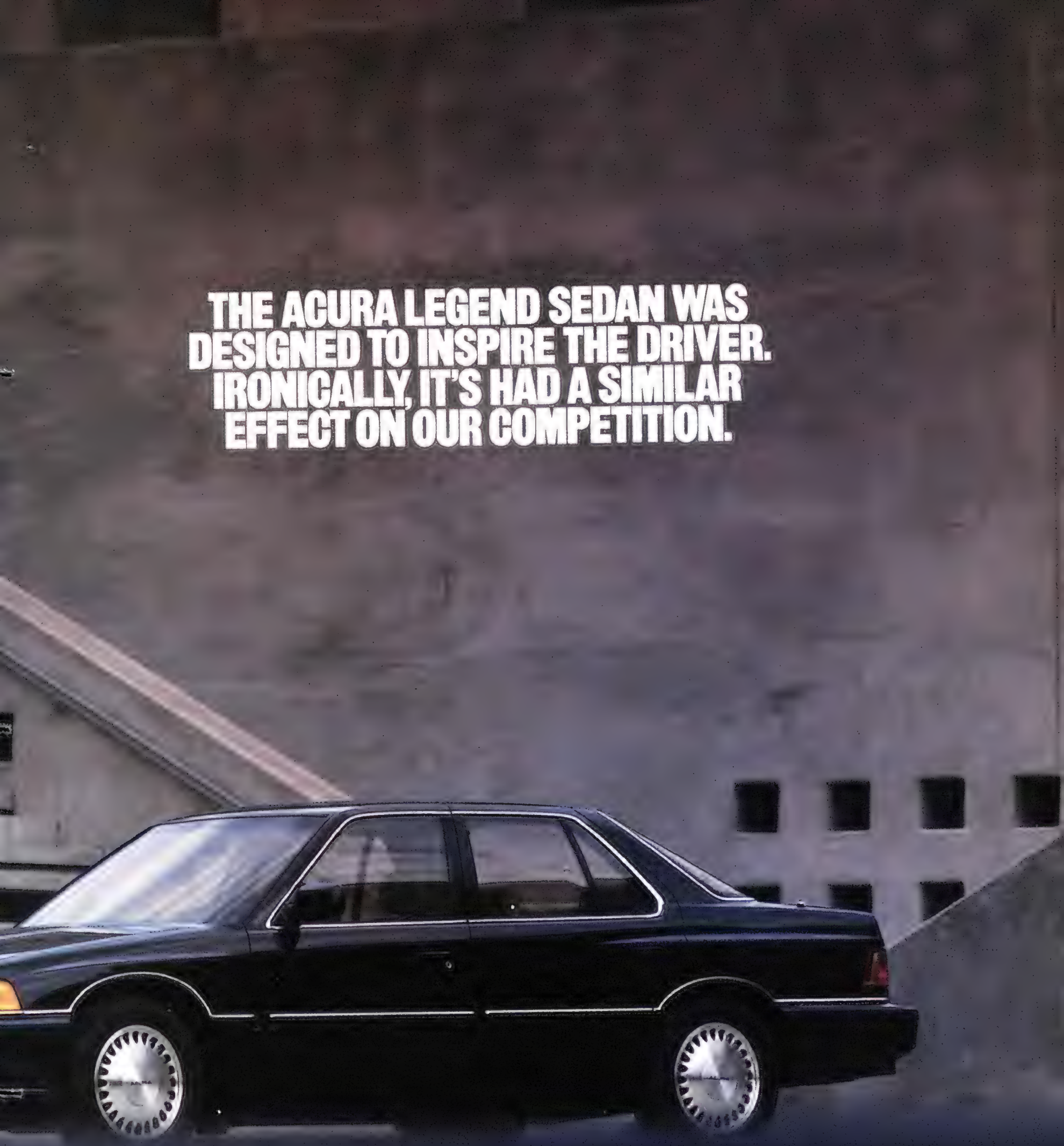

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By James R. Chiles

At science fairs there's not much playing around

Winning science fair team includes Noah Mittlefehldt, Heidi Rootes, teacher Laurie Peterman, Vince Voelz.

The young contestants tackle everything from acid rain to chaos theory to effects of headache remedies on radish plants

A health inspector finds a homemade particle accelerator in a Dallas neighborhood. Homeowners in Utica, Michigan, discover five-foot-high transformer coils in their basement capable of producing a 150,000-volt charge. Gerbils in Oklahoma City race through mazes under the influence of Kool-Aid and NoDoz. And in Troy, Michigan, a home freezer is found packed with weeds and bugs.

There's only one way to explain all this: it's science fair season. Every year, more than a million junior high and high school students harness the elemental forces of nature and tell about it on hinged panels, or "boards," as the initiates call them. Thousands of young people begin their scientific careers this way; some even make new and patentable discoveries. All get a chance to pursue the creative side of science. About 800 win booths at an international science fair that attracts the best and brightest of the test-tube set.

At a time when many high schoolers complain of boredom and lack of purpose, the parents of a science fair contender probably will have to drag their teenager out of a basement laboratory to eat and sleep. Does a tenth-grader need to test his model airplane in 300-mile-per-hour winds? He'll persuade an aerospace lab to lend time in a wind tunnel. "The successful kids at the international fairs have a lot of self-discipline," Michigan science teacher John Miner told me. "There's no way to force them to do the amount of work necessary. Mentally, they're as tough as any athlete."

For 16 months I dropped in on science fairs big and small, from Texas to Pennsylvania. I learned that the best way to understand the process is to follow a single student through the competitions, all the way up to the top event—the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), held this year in Tulsa, Oklahoma—if he or she should happen to go that far. I found a likely prospect, a ninth-grader, in the Twin Cities suburb of Anoka, Minnesota.

Fourteen-year-old Noah Mittlefehldt, a husky six-footer, could pass for a college sophomore. He loves science, but he's also an athlete; on his bedroom wall at home, 40 science fair award certificates share space with one for winning a district wrestling championship. Noah spends a lot of his time in the basement. "I have sort of a science room down there," he says. "I like to call it a laboratory; it has beakers, columns of soil and, of course, my boards." From the last of these—15 tagboard panels containing data, charts and reports from his previous projects—Noah gets inspiration for his current work.

Noah has been studying water pollution, and particularly acid rain, for almost three years. He has written to politicians in this country and abroad, describing the damage his research has documented and proposing an international summit on acid rain. He even has the summit location picked out: a lodge on the shore of a Swedish lake that's been rendered sterile and glassy by acid rainfall.

Back in April 1989, Noah had won statewide awards for his second project on acid rain, though he was a year shy of being old enough for the international fair. Just a month later he had his 1989-90 project planned: he would compare the effects of acid rain on lakes in Minnesota and New York. That summer, his father drove him out to the Adirondacks for the fieldwork. They backpacked in to Lake Colden, where they slept

Their broom-closet-size exhibits ready for judges' inspection, students at the International Science and Engineering Fair, held this May in Tulsa, become acquainted. All won their way here at earlier fairs.

Photographs by Layne Kennedy

Tabor Fisher of Hildreth, Nebraska, displays his state pins, the major commodity of exchange at ISEF.

in a lean-to and Noah collected samples and took the necessary readings.

Then, in the fall, Noah entered Laurie Peterman's honors science class at Fred Moore Junior High. He was in good hands: Peterman—Mrs. P. to the students—has recently produced more science fair contenders than any other teacher in the region. There are a couple of reasons. For one thing, she makes science fun. Instead of giving a pen-and-paper test on the laws of motion, for example, Peterman had the students, working in pairs, design amusement park rides. Each team had to present its ride to the class in a sales pitch, including in their description how Newton's laws and energy conversion applied to it. Noah and his partner, a wrestling team buddy, created a roller coaster ride. "It started out with a 110-degree drop, went underground, came up and did two loops . . ." Noah recalls. "We called it the Terminator."

For another thing, Peterman requires every student to do a science fair project, with her serving as resource person. "We bounce ideas off each other," she says. "Or they come to me and say, 'Where can I find this or that,' and we look in the Yellow Pages under 'Equipment Supplies.' These kids are only ninth-graders in a regular old junior high," she adds; "so I say to them, 'This is how we do a research plan, this is how we fill out the forms'—all that kind of stuff."

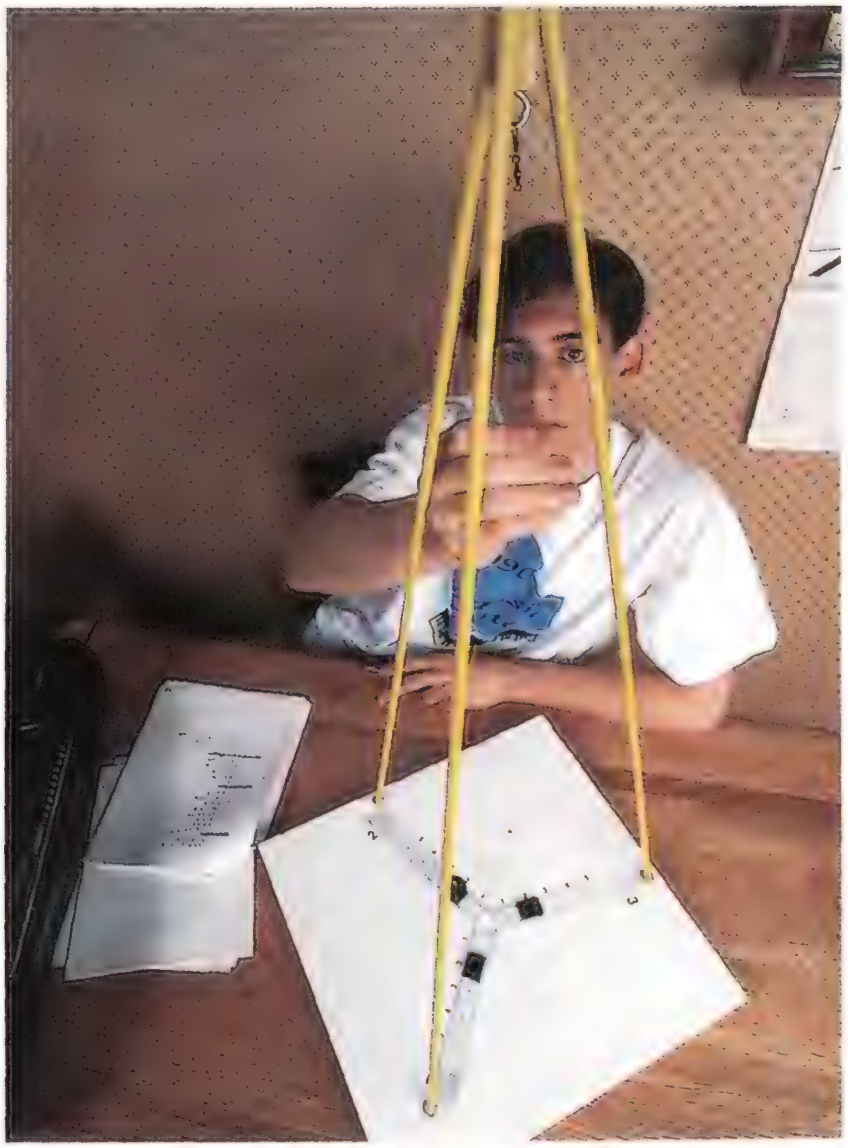
When the school year started, Noah was far out in front of his classmates in science fair preparations. He was aiming for two chances at earning a trip to the international fair at Tulsa in May. One was winning at a regional fair in February that would send its two top students to Tulsa. If he fell short of that goal, he might have a second chance at a Minnesota-wide competition, which would also send its two top students.

The project seemed rinky-dink at first

By early February, most of Peterman's students had finished all their lab work and were polishing up the final results for their boards. Many had gotten outside help. When Vince Voelz decided on a project concerning chaos theory, Peterman's husband, Brian, a college math teacher, helped him with the statistics as well as with figuring out the project's focus. Another student, Ryan Gerber, studied rusting in cars in relation to what gets put on the roads to melt ice. "He thought his project was just kind of rinky-dink," says Peterman. "But then, he talked to an engineer at DOT [the Department of Transportation] who got excited about it and let him come down and use his lab. You could see he was thinking, 'Wow! Somebody besides my science teacher thinks this is important.'"

Noah, meanwhile, was now playing catch-up. With less than two weeks to go before the regional fair, he

In his basement lab, Noah Mittlefehldt examines paramecia to see how acidified water affected them.



Vince Voelz's project dealt with chaos theory, asking "How Predictable is a Dampened Driven Pendulum?"

was starting lab research to see what kind of damage acid rain might be causing to the tissues of the plankton, crayfish and other invertebrates that make up the food chain in Northern lakes. He needed a scanning electron microscope for this, and found one he could borrow for a few hours at the University of Minnesota.

It may seem like overkill for a ninth-grader to borrow an electron microscope or a gas chromatograph, but projects at today's competitions are pushing the outer edges of science. One of last year's top prizewinners at the international fair had his own argon laser inside a classified U.S. Army lab. The sky is, literally, the limit. Seventeen-year-old Mary Fischer of Silver City, New Mexico, was granted time on the Very Large Array, the world's largest radio astronomy facility. All its antennas were at her service for nine and a half hours to study an unusual x-ray source.

Noah arrived at the electron microscopy lab early on a Monday morning with two vials of daphnia, which are freshwater creatures about the size of a sand grain. One group was living in water of tartness similar to that of a lake polluted by acid rain; the other lived in fairly neutral water. Noah soaked his specimens in a series of alcohol solutions, removed all the liquids in a dryer, mounted the tiny bodies on a metal plug and, finally, coated them with a layer of gold only atoms thick. Scientist Rodney Kuehn stopped by often to demonstrate or explain each technique and then, entrusting the equipment to Noah, went on his way.

It was early afternoon before Noah placed his first specimen in the electron microscope, a dishwasher-size machine with a shiny column on top. He took a seat at the console to the right. The electron microscope seemed to agree with Noah; he steered the camera over the rugged terrain of a daphnia body with the aplomb of a helicopter pilot. He had his answer quickly: mildly acidic water does corrode daphnia limbs. Noah brought home some microscope photographs for evidence and rearranged his board to make room for the information.

I next caught up with Noah standing in front of his exhibit at the regional fair, which was held on a cold Saturday in February at the state university in St. Cloud, Minnesota. The regional fairs—398 of them—are sponsored by businesses and universities. The awards vary; the $500 top prize at the St. Cloud fair is typical, but at the Dallas regional fair, Southern Methodist University

The author, who is a frequent contributor to these pages, has written recently on county seat wars, air traffic school and flying cars.

Seventh-graders Michele Raitz and Ryan Reese strike up a friendship at a Minnesota regional fair.

gives $15,000 scholarships. Some of the judges are university and high school instructors; others come from technology-related companies. All donate their time.

Many of the judges at today's science fairs were participants in past science fairs, which go back at least as far as 1928. In that year, the American Institute of New York City first held one for New York area teenagers at the Museum of Natural History. It went national in 1950, under the nonprofit institution called Science Service. From the time it became international in 1966, the fair has continued to grow each year, doubling in size since 1970. Now, 46 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. possessions and 6 foreign countries hold regional fairs that send winners to the ISEF.

At the St. Cloud regional, Noah spent the morning talking with judges, identifiable by the ribbons they wear and their neutral expressions. Each opened with standard questions: How did you pick this subject? What mistakes did you make? What would you do as a follow-up project? As Noah gestured through his explanations, other students were downstairs making speeches to more panels of judges. Vince Voelz made a hit here, taking all questions eagerly. At one point he advised a judge to read a certain book on chaos theory.

At the awards ceremony that afternoon, Noah won a place at the international fair in Tulsa. He also won a trip to the state fair in April to exhibit his project again and refine his technique. The other top winner was classmate Heidi Rootes, whose project was about how humans might learn during sleep. Its title: "Is Hypnopedia the Answer to Extended Productive Learning Intervals? A Continuing Study." Vince came in third, winning a trip to Tulsa as an alternate. It was a grand slam for Peterman.

On Monday morning following the regional fair, the three students were heroes at Fred Moore Junior High. "There's a PA system in our school," says Noah. "During the morning announcements, the principal said we were going to the international; that's how most of the kids in the school heard about it. For the rest of the day they were stopping me in the halls saying, 'Whoa! I want to shake your hand.' " When the honors science class met later that day, Peterman found a big cake sitting on her desk. Spelled out in icing was the boast: "Fred Moore rules! Thanks to Mrs. P., they know we're no fools."

But so much for glory. At the state competition, the judges were harder on Noah than at the regional fair. Still, he was happy for the expert critique. Some wanted more scientific reference checks, or "controls," on his acidified-water experiments. One thought Noah had tested too few snails. With little more than a week to go before the international, he returned home and started additional experiments with a dozen more containers of lake creatures.

It was close, but by the time the Minnesota winners and their teachers climbed on the chartered bus for Tulsa, Noah had finished all his work. Once there,

Using the back of a patient friend as a writing surface, a student stays on top of ISEF paperwork.

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they spent Sunday afternoon setting up their booths and troubleshooting. There was a bit of a scramble when Noah ran into trouble with the dreaded "red tag." A red tag is the calling card of the Safety Committee, and means a violation that needs immediate attention—it could even mean expulsion from the fair. Some types of experiments receive especially strict scrutiny from the committee, such as tests on humans or other vertebrates. In Noah's case, it was problems with his registration forms. "We had to chase around trying to get his papers together," remembers Peterman. "I told him I was gonna have to shave his head in return for all the gray hairs he gave me."

Noah spent Monday and Tuesday walking the aisles of the exhibit hall, studying what the other 753 students had produced. He was surprised to find that some projects had been under way for an amazing six years, or twice as long as his. It also concerned him that the environmental category, at 90 projects, was the biggest of all 13 divisions, making it that much harder for Noah to stand out.

Judging began Wednesday morning, with an elite corps of judges, who outnumbered the students by a couple of hundred. They were engineers, biochemists and botanists, and were alert for depth and originality. One student told me that she got to sit down only three times in more than five hours of judging. Noah hosted 17 judges in seven hours.

Camera-toting parents at the ISEF closing ceremony line up to get photographs as the awards are given.

Then, the long day of interrogation over, students had two days to sightsee and socialize. Souvenir trading was one priority: most students arrived with a large supply of lapel pins from their state or country, which they traded with other students at every opportunity. The pins piled up on hats, jackets and sashes.

A few of the students spent several hours in the exhibit hall each day sitting by their projects, available to chat with visitors. One was Alex Fleming, of St. Simons Island, Georgia. Over three years of designing and testing, Alex had developed a new way of arranging the wings on aircraft to increase lift. He had tested it in every way short of building a full-scale plane, using hours of wind tunnel tests at Georgia Tech and scratch-built radio-controlled models constructed with meticulous attention to wing profiles.

Alex's finely polished project demonstrates how stiff the international competition can be for a newcomer like Noah. Alex, a senior, had already been to the international fair twice before. A few other seniors had been three times before. Some veterans had won expense-paid trips in years past to research facilities in the United States, Europe and Japan, where they had spent priceless hours discussing their chosen field with experts of international stature.

Alex was clearly ready to intercept any question a judge could throw at him. Even his display was a masterpiece of efficiency. Using no more space than anyone else—about enough for a broom closet—he managed to wedge in a hundred plastic-mounted

Networking, science-fair-style: advanced competitors at ISEF realize they're meeting future colleagues.

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At the Minnesota state science fair in Moorehead, Heidi Rootes explains her project to a judge. Many of the judges are former science fair competitors themselves, and are thus happy to donate their time.

hanging charts, a videocassette player, four large swinging panels, rotating pillars with their own graphs, two shelves holding four thick notebooks of data, a table-size airplane model built for his wind tunnel tests, and a desk. And the desk—of his own design—had a built-in television and a removable drawing board, which pulled out of a slot. At Friday night's closing awards (p. 72), Alex would win one of the two highest prizes at the ISEF, a trip to the 1990 Nobel Prize ceremonies in Stockholm.

During public visiting hours on Thursday and Friday, Alex was happy to talk about his project to anyone who expressed interest, but he operated at such a high altitude that hardly any of the casual visitors could understand him. Other projects were equally obscure, with titles like "Experimental Turbulence and the k-Epsilon Transport Equations" and "Elucidation of Calcium Ion Involvement in Bacterial Chemotaxis."

But the patient browser could find much to pique his or her curiosity: projects about using blood-spatter marks to reconstruct a crime; how to grow tomatoes in plastic sawdust; earthworms and their taste for degradable packaging; what fiddler crabs have in common with Gothic cathedrals; and the effect of acetaminophen headache remedies on radish plants. (Apparently the effect on radishes is none too good; the student in charge of the project warned darkly in his conclusion that using the drug on plants in large amounts would deprive "the Earth of its foliage and cause long-term effects, the demise of mankind.")

At Exhibit 718, visitors found something that just about anybody could relate to: a robotic luggage transporter designed to follow its owner around the airport (p. 73). Whenever the designer, Mark Woehrer, dropped by his booth, a group was bound to gather in minutes. Part of the reason was Mark himself, a boisterous, absent-minded Nebraskan who just naturally drew a crowd. Friday night he would win a top award in the engineering division.

I watched Mark unveil his "Tag-A-Long," a motorized platform with an empty suitcase on top, and set it on the red carpet in the aisle. He strapped a home-built infrared transmitter to his ankle. As he walked, the carrier followed by tracking his beacon; when it lost sight of him, it began making tight circles in an attempt to find him again. After a few more seconds, it set off a siren to call him back. The carrier also had a siren to warn of theft and stairs.

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The top winners at ISEF this year were, from left, Alex Fleming, Joshua Fischman and Raymond Meng.

Mark said he worked on his machine eight hours each day after school for several months. "I first got the idea on December 24, 1989, at 11:05 P.M.," he said, and showed me the entry in a copious lab notebook that serves as his memory. "I probably took two years off my life," he added. Mark's mother permitted him to test the luggage transporter in her dining room, and his father—a deputy sheriff—made regular trips to Lincoln for obscure electrical parts.

Mark and his family illustrate some important points about science fairs: winners need not have physics professors for parents. Nor do they have to attend science high schools in New York or Chicago. The parents of Bill Cordova, a 1989 top winner, operate Mexican restaurants in the Southwest. Alex Fleming's father manages a seafood processing plant in Georgia. Mark's physics class in Wahoo has only two students. The parents I talked with did seem to share one characteristic: all were supportive, yet had found the willpower to resist tinkering with their children's projects.

It's true that some students make that part easy, like Mark Woehrer, who steadfastly refused to let his father or anyone else touch his luggage transporter during development. Apparently this streak of independence surfaces early in science fair contenders. Mark's mother told me how her son, when less than 2 years old, disassembled a child-safety gate one day and handed her the pieces. Unable to keep their Houdini-like toddler in his room at night, the Woehrers surrendered and let him play with blocks each night until dawn.

Being the parent of a top science fair contender does require an extra measure of patience. Lori Stec's parents, whom I found standing by their daughter's display, described how Lori's six years of research had required her to gather 10,000 goldenrod plants, each of which was several feet tall, and store large numbers of them in their house. She was studying galls on the plants, which result when certain parasites attack the plants. "Our freezer was full of galls and larvae all summer," said Lori's mother.

But Barbara Stec didn't mind the loss of her freezer nearly as much as she minded Lori's need to grind up goldenrod plants—using her food processor in the family kitchen—into a green, foul-smelling paste that Lori's father described as "horrible, pukey stuff." "She went through two Cuisinarts," Barbara Stec said. "Finally I just gave her the second machine and told her to take it to the lab at the university."

By Friday afternoon the visitors had cleared out and students were getting ready for the final awards ceremony that night. Each of the 13 categories, from behavioral sciences through zoology, offered three levels of awards. There had been two previous gatherings for special awards by companies, government groups and professional organizations, but this last ceremony was strictly for the official ISEF awards. Students held them in the highest esteem even though, in dollar value, they didn't come close to the special awards. The participants sat grouped by state or nation, armed with flags and banners. Noah sat with the Minnesota delegation in the rear of the hall.

But the awards in the huge environmental sciences category passed him by, and at evening's end Noah was prizeless. I found him a few minutes after the ceremony, grimly dismantling his display with a hammer. Throngs were gathering on other aisles, waiting to congratulate the big winners, but there were no science fair groupies waiting to shake Noah's hand.

A few weeks later, back at Fred Moore Junior High, the school year was grinding to a close. On the last day of honors science, Heidi presented Laurie Peterman with a thank-you card signed by all the kids in the class. A few months earlier, Mrs. P. had joked to the class, "I'll have to quit teaching now because I've had such a good year it could never get any better." To which one of the teenagers had protested, "No, you can't! I've got a sister coming up."

And Noah? Never fear. There are plenty of lakes to save from acid rain, and he's already planning a project for the 1991 international fair in Orlando, Florida. But this time, he says, with the savvy of a seasoned competitor, maybe he'll enter in a smaller category, like physics or chemistry—where he'll have a better chance of winning.

A hit with all who made the pilgrimage to ISEF was Mark Woehrer's award-winning robotic suitcase carrier.

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"Grown-ups tell us, 'Just say no.' That's easy for them to say."

"Maybe they forgot what it's like.

"At parties, at school, kids are saying to try this or do that, and they're my friends. I mean how many times can I hear I'm a loser.

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IBM

By Jake Page

Pushy and brassy, the starling was an ill-advised import

An avian Attila the Hun, it evicts rightful residents, plunders fields and orchards, swoops into towns and cities to wreak havoc

A few decades ago a previous owner of my house erected a large, boxlike addition at the rear. I have recently discovered that there is, available for anyone to see in the county records, an official critique of my house by an architectural historian who pronounced it a fine example of the Queen Anne Victorian style—but for its "most unfortunate addition."

Well.

I consider that a most unfortunate pronouncement. The addition is a major benefit for those who live inside the house, providing excellent space for children and dogs to play downstairs, and a spacious bedroom above. Its walls are mostly windows, below and above, and to stand in this unfortunate addition and look west across the pasturelands to the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, while a breeze blows smartly through an old spruce in the backyard, is akin in feeling to standing at the helm of a great ship putting out to sea. Architectural historians do not care about such things. They are evidently trained to consider people who live in historic houses as imperfect maintenance crews at best; at worst, unavoidable pests,

The starling will give other birds their walking papers while sending tasty arthropods scurrying for shelter.

Illustrations by Lane Yerkes

"A century ago there were none here. The United States now houses about three starlings for every house cat."

parasitizing monuments to a more perfect, inert past.

The architects will be further discouraged to learn that the addition provides harborage for other pests besides my family: to wit, starlings. Imperfect carpentry left a small entrance high up on the north wall, and while any number of birds may well have taken advantage of it in the past, it is the starlings who muscled their way in during my watch.

Starlings have supporters. Some find them handsome birds, but I don't. The metallic purple-and-green sheen they sport reminds me of nothing but a grubby oil slick in a roadside puddle. Their tails are stubby and out of proportion (you don't need a degree in architecture to know a little about proportion). It is a shame that someone long ago found the white spots on the oily plumage reminiscent of tiny stars, hence the bird's nearly sacrilegious name. Stars? Rock stars, maybe. The way they swagger around the lawn reminds me more of the large and ill-bred bullies of an otherwise happy childhood. But starlings, like bullies everywhere, inspire awe.

Officially they are called "European starlings," with a fitting scientific name: *Sturnus vulgaris*. They are one of the most successful birds in the world. There are an estimated 600 million of them on the globe, of which one-third inhabit North America. The United States houses about three starlings for every house cat. A century ago there were no starlings here. Like most of us they are recent immigrants. In 1890, a lunatic (we can now say for certain) named Eugene Schieffelin brought 80 of the birds to this country from Europe

"By 1896 they were in Brooklyn, two years later off in all directions, moving up the Hudson as far as Ossining."

and on March 6 released them in Central Park in New York City. He released 40 more in April 1891. There is a rumor that Schieffelin had devised a crazed scheme to introduce into this country all the birds mentioned in the works of Shakespeare. There is also speculation that, ironically, some of the birds spent that first winter roosting under the eaves of the American Museum of Natural History. It is documented that at least one pair nested there the following spring, much to that great institution's lasting embarrassment. The birds took hold. By 1891 twenty starlings had made it to Staten Island. In 1896 they were in Brooklyn, and two years later they were on their way in all directions, reaching Stamford, Connecticut, and moving north up the Hudson as far as Ossining (known chiefly as the site of Sing Sing, which is a penitentiary, not a panda).

Bird people began to look upon the starling with the same wariness with which the American Indians no doubt observed the Pilgrims. In 1917, ornithologist Edward Howe Forbush wrote: "As undesirable qualities are often accentuated when a bird is introduced into a new country, we cannot view the introduction of the starling without some apprehension." Referring to the bird's "general fitness for the battle of life," Forbush insightfully pointed out that the starling thrives especially in cultivated lands, and that in Europe it had had thousands of years to adapt to such places as well as to the propinquity of large numbers of people, while the native American songbirds with whom the starling was already seen to be competing had had only a couple of centuries of such learning conditions. It was known then by bird people that the likes of wrens, bluebirds, flickers—virtually any bird that nested in a hole big enough for a starling—would have to step aside. The starling was reported, for example, to lurk around while a flicker patiently crafted a nest hole—and then to appropriate it. After a minor struggle, the flicker would go off to build another nest, only to have it appropriated by yet another starling.

By 1959, the same year that Alaska was admitted to the Union, there were starlings in San Diego: Manifest Destiny for starlings, achieved in a mere 69 years. Today, from Alaska to northern Mexico, there is hardly a place they do not go, even the beach. They are often found in the company of grackles, blackbirds and other avian lowlifes. In March, hundreds, even thousands of members of this demimonde gather in the skeletal trees around my house and in the pasture, jostling and shrieking, suddenly to gust up and swarm in the air like insects, only to settle down in other trees nearby as the unmusical chorus continues. The racket is awesome, the sheer numbers ominous. When, as country singer Jim Croce once put it, "the bad folks all get together," there is usually trouble in store.

Some experts say that starlings actually provide great

"The chief enemy of the clover weevil, they also serve to control cutworms and Japanese beetles."

"Starlings have been known to imitate dog barks, sounds of machinery, even the ringing of a telephone."

benefit from the "economic" standpoint. The chief enemy of the clover weevil, they also serve to control cutworms and Japanese beetles (another import). Half their diet is insects of one sort or another, mostly ground-dwelling insects, but they will pick off the occasional wasp or bee as well. Thus, they are said to be the farmer's friend. But you can have, at any given moment, too many friends around. When a flock of starlings, sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands, swarms into a cherry orchard or vineyard and methodically takes the entire season's fruit crop, the farmer or vintner would probably prefer the mercies of a few enemies. In fact, starlings have become major pests in wheatfields, and they rapaciously thieve cattle feed from any open trough. Around here, the starlings gorge on my chickens' laying mash, a feed designed to promote fecundity, of all things.

Certainly starlings do little to improve the quality of life in the cities and towns that they also frequent. For several years, for example, beginning in 1979, a gigantic roost had struck a park in Leicester, England. Perhaps a million birds took up nightly residence in the spring. Their droppings ruined picnic tables, turned paths into malodorous, slippery hazards, and produced an acidic effect in the soil that killed off much of the park's plants and shrubs. Their weight broke branches off trees. Each day at dawn, the birds would begin to twitter, this soon rising to a nearly deafening crescendo, at which point wave after wave would rise up like dark clouds of smoke, taking specific flight lines out of the city to various distant feeding grounds. After a day's foraging they formed up at what British ornithologists identified as 20 outlying "pre-roost assembly points," from which they then descended again upon the hapless park. As they approached, they engaged in astounding aerial maneuvers over the city, leading one observer, Ann Tate, to wonder—as so many have before—about the superb synchronization of their flight, especially since they appear to be leaderless. "Thousands of birds swept and soared, stunt riding the sky," she wrote. "At invisible signals they dropped into the trees, then rose again to stream upwards, circle and resettle. The noise was immense. What is the purpose of it all?"

God's wrath? Scientists do not believe in such things, but they don't know the purpose of it all, either. The birds are obviously expending a great deal of energy in these aerial displays, and such enormous air shows can and often do attract predators, such as hawks, from far and wide. When a predator does show up, the streaming, soaring starlings instantaneously merge into tighter dark balls too dense for a predator to fly into. It would appear that there is some sort of communication during these spectaculars aside from alarm calls at the sight of predators. Tate speculates (perhaps a bit wildly) that maybe in all that apparent chaos there is a system for learning from one another about locations for the best food. Shades of the dance of the bees? It is a Hitchcockian thought, and I hope, not the case.

Jostling, bickering, grumpy roostmates

In any event, once such a group settles down for the night, there is a lot of jostling and bickering. Like sea gulls, starlings require one another's company but are nonetheless grumpy about it. The nightly squabbles and shoving matches concern position. They all evidently want to be in the core of the roost, since it would provide better protection from nocturnal predators as well as warmth on cold nights. Generally speaking, the core is inhabited by older, larger male bullies with smaller, younger females relegated to the edge. It is not known if the big old males play a leadership role, such as in the successive waves that head out mornings to forage.

However starling society works, close observers use such phrases as "highly organized" and "supremely adaptable and efficient" to describe it—something like

Since writing this article, Jake Page has left his historic house and "unfortunate addition" with starlings, and gone to New Mexico, where he's found—starlings.

Raul Julia

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"Like most birds, the starlings are personally fastidious—they preen a lot, bathe a lot, and will even try to keep their feet from getting muddy."

an army, and one that has so far defied the human imagination when it comes to getting rid of such an invasion. The birds are not long fooled by tape recordings of their distress signals, nor long daunted by bright lights, explosions, dog packs, water hoses or flares. There is no suitable starlicide, either. One current strategy is to take advantage of the birds' ability to learn. The search is on for a chemical deterrent that would be sufficiently toxic so the starlings, having once or twice been made to feel awful, would quickly learn to avoid anything that tasted or looked the same.

So farmers await clinical trials of deterrents that they can spray around the place and send the starlings off to . . . where? Some other farm? Meanwhile I am placing my bets on the starlings, much as I hate to do so. Starlings are simply too good at what they do to be pushed around for long. They seem smart. It is not clear that mimicry is related to intelligence among birds, for example, but it may be. And the starling is an underrated mimic, pulling off the songs of virtually every bird that frequents my yard, as well as a wolf whistle it may have picked up from a parrot and passed along from generation to generation. Starlings have been known to imitate dog barks, the sounds of machinery, even the ringing of the telephone. A college professor is reported to have taught a captive starling to say "*Sturnus vulgaris*" as confidently as an ornithologist. It *is* amusing to listen to these vaguely sleazy upstarts imitate their social superiors—cardinals, robins and the rest of what might be thought of here in Virginia as first families. Intelligence or no, starlings have a few distinct advantages over the other songbirds when it comes to survival.

First, they are stronger and more muscular than other birds their size, with robust heads and necks. Their aggression, even among themselves, is well known. I once stood transfixed as two starlings rassled and slashed each other for more than 20 minutes, rolling around the lawn, shrieking in what looked like mortal combat, till one of them wobbled off, leaving the winner panting on the grass.

Second, their yellow beaks are very sharp, but more than that, they operate in a way that is very rare among insect-hunting birds. Most birds can exert a surprising amount of force when they close their mandibles. So can a starling, but it also can exert a great force when it *opens* its beak. This in itself makes it especially good at foraging for insects and worms under the soil, allowing it to open up an inch-long gash in the lawn to find its prey.

Third, a special visual capacity evolved along with the starling's useful beak. Behind the beak, the skull is quite narrow, which means that the eyes emerge at an angle that provides more forward vision than in most

birds. Further, the starling can move its eyes—together or independently—forward, backward and upward. Thus, the bird can attain about 43 degrees of binocular vision in front, just less than the owl's capacity. And thanks to the configuration of the starling's retina and other structures of the inner eye, it is myopic and farsighted at the same time. Having myopic binocular vision means that the bird can focus at the region near the tip of its bill, making the perusal for subsoil prey more efficient. It doesn't need to pause and cock its head to see what it has turned up, as other birds must. (The way birds cock their heads is somehow—for me—endearing; perhaps the fact that starlings don't do this makes them a bit creepy, even menacing.) At the same time, thanks to the starling eye's internal asymmetry, the outer regions of the retina are farsighted. So, while looking with sharp, nearsighted binocular vision at what's going on around its prying beak, the bird can—without pausing even for the instant it takes you or me to refocus our eyes—simultaneously be on the lookout for distant predators. Such efficient vision lets the bird find food where and when other birds can't, and this in turn helps make it possible for the starling to raise two, sometimes three, broods of young each season, going forth and multiplying with a vigor that would amaze the authors of such biblical edicts.

Which brings me back to the starlings that live in the wall of my unfortunate addition. I sense an unspoken, even nonspecific community pressure to seal up the hole and rid the house of these tagalongs. To shut them off I would, in all fairness, have to wait until the young were gone. But each year, once their squalling ceases, I forget, remembering only in the spring, when once again it is too late for evictions.

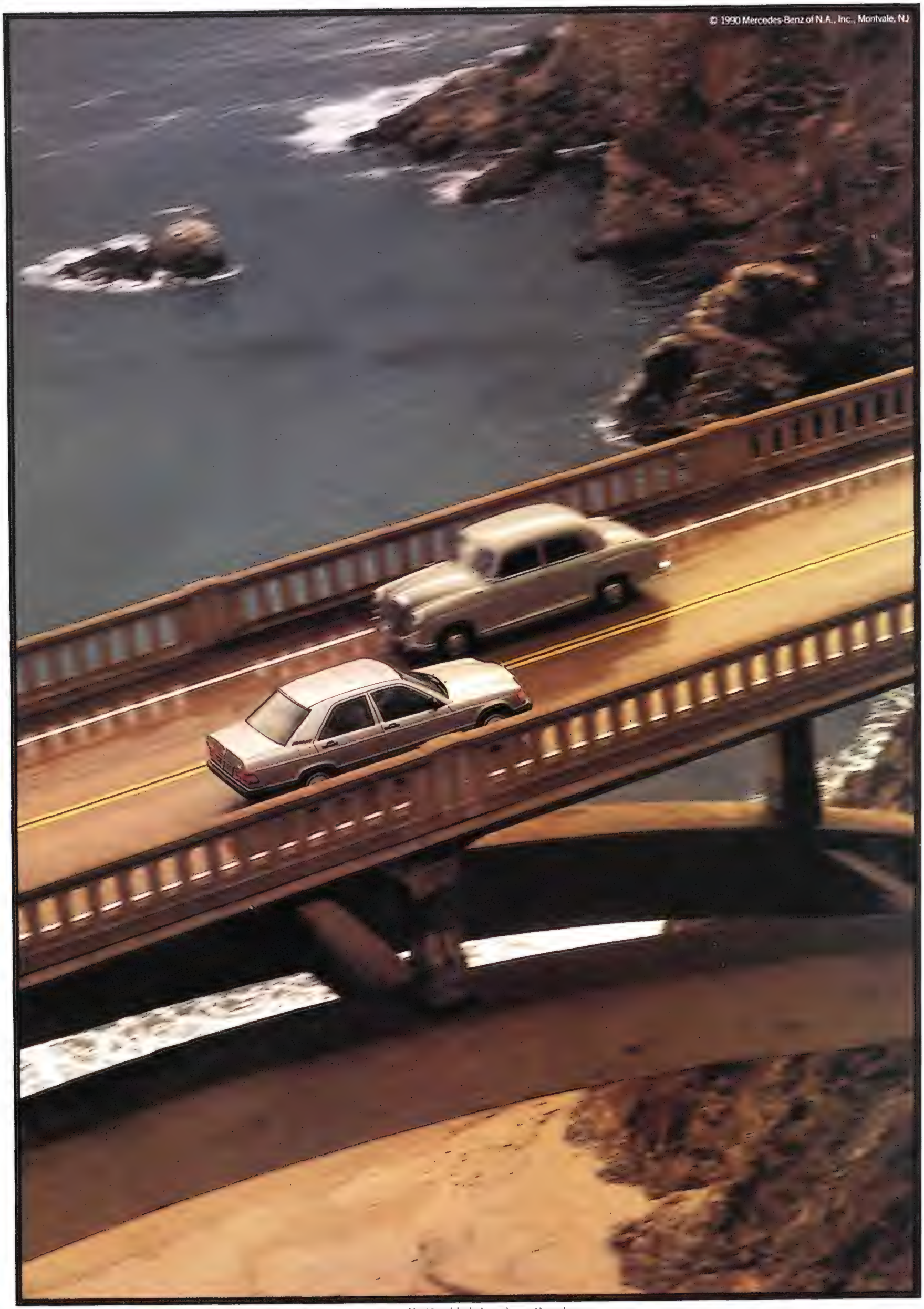
On the other hand, they don't seem to be enlarging the hole or causing any structural damage. If they were, and the addition fell off, the architects would surely applaud. There are sanitary conditions to consider—vermin and all. Ever efficient, starlings return year after year and reuse the old nest. Why waste time? But after several seasons, nests get pretty pest-ridden.

Prissy bullies with clean feet

Like most birds, starlings are personally fastidious. They bathe a lot, preen a lot, even try to keep their feet from getting muddy. Prissy bullies. More than that, each spring in March and April, the males do a bit of restoration on their historic homes. They weave the tips of young plant shoots into the old nest. Scientists have found that the birds prefer nine particular plants for this task, and all nine contain a variety of chemicals that act as natural fumigants. Some drive bacteria and other parasites away, others act like hormones to inhibit the hatching of eggs of the likes of lice.

Awesome indeed. Starlings long ago completed their chemical research and clinical trials. They'll probably stay in the house. I still don't like them, mind you. I don't like their swagger, and when a parent flies on a javelin-straight trajectory from the pasture to the hole in my house, it reminds me of nothing other than a stubby, dark, low-flying warplane. I've got to hand it to starlings for their many talents in the battle of life, but I won't take my hat off to them.

"They are stronger and more muscular than other birds their size, with robust heads and necks."



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By Israel Shenker

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A century after Agatha Christie's birth, we celebrate this shy, upper-class matron who positively adored clues and corpses

She scribbled on any handy paper—school exercise books, account books, out-of-date diaries, even the backs of laundry lists. "Now that would be a neat way of covering up the crime so that nobody would see the point," she'd note. "Arsenic . . . looks like Caviare—plum pudding—passion fruit." Secretive, she wrote sketchily, conspiratorially, concealing her thoughts, perhaps even from herself. *"Possible plot—do it yourself—Girl and not really sister—August."*

Cooking or gardening, walking in the country or riding on a train, she found the odd notion taking fuller shape: a neat swindle, a useful poison, a handy weapon. Pondering a debutante's regimen, she scribbled: "Debutante teas etc. Mothers killed off in rapid succession." After seeing a performance by Ruth Draper, thinking how clever Draper's impersonations were, she got the idea for a book called *Lord Edgware Dies.* Another book was inspired by a sentence: "Why didn't they ask Evans?" Occasionally she mumbled audibly. Her sister—named Madge—said if she didn't stop muttering, people would take her for an idiot. "Well, you forget things very often if you don't hear them aloud," she replied.

Crime was her business, ingenuity her modus operandi, and she—named Agatha—got off with no end of loot. Small wonder that she is now celebrated as Queen of Crime, Mistress of Mystery, Duchess of Death. If the celebration of her crimes seems particularly fervent just now, the explanation lies in an obsolete calendar: September 15, 1890—her birthdate, just a century ago.

We have not been allowed to ignore the date. A centenary office has been established in London. The Torbay Council in her native Devon—uniting the seaside towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham—has organized a banquet and fireworks, a classic car rally, lectures and exhibits under the banner of "Mystery on the English Riviera." Old and new books about her cascade from the presses. Television is paying homage with new productions, even a version of her first published novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles.* In London, Madame Tussaud's has adorned the lady's wax likeness with a fresh gown and shoes, direct from the author's preserved wardrobe.

This tribute is not excessive for a writer whose works helped raise a new standard on the battleground of the British mystery novel, in which suspects and victims are often artificially confined in English country houses or in some luxurious means of transport. In Christie's meticulously plotted stories, readers are challenged to pierce veils of obscuring clues to identify villains concealed within an aura of innocence. "The whole point was that it must be somebody obvious but at the same time," the calculating author maintained, "for some reason, you would then find that it was not obvious, that he could not possibly have done it. But really of course he had." What she offered was not luster of style but puzzle of situation—unerring logic and red-herring diversions leading to a surprise solution. Good triumphed over evil, while a body or three slumped unceremoniously in the library.

The most successful author in history?

With every semblance of sincerity, her heirs claim sales of a billion copies in English, another billion in 63 foreign languages. Those with zeal for round numbers are not on oath. Allow for exaggeration, discount for familial loyalty, and reality remains: she is in a class of her own, and those who stir centenary tribute call her the most successful author in history. Who would be ungenerous enough to cavil?

She herself would have shied away from the hype. She didn't like loud voices, crowds, cocktail parties, alcohol, smoking, marmalade, oysters, lukewarm food, the smell and taste of hot milk. She liked music, railroad trains, anything to do with numbers, swimming, silence, sleeping, dreaming, eating, the smell of coffee, theater, most dogs, apples and especially eating apples in the bath. And she liked houses. There was a time, before World War II, when she owned eight.

At her desk in 1950, the world-famous creator of Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot pauses between words.

A dreamy child in a brainy family, she got little schooling, felt she was "not very good at anything."

By 1906 a fashionable finishing school in Paris had provided her with an elegant look and a chapeau.

Father was an American who enjoyed an independent income and permanent leisure. Before he married he had a flirtation with Jennie Jerome, who was to be Winston Churchill's mother. Mother was English, and father, mother and the three children—including Agatha Mary Clarissa, the youngest—settled comfortably in Torquay. One of Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller's earliest memories was of walking with her mother on market day there. A boy carrying a large, loaded basket careened into her, and she started to cry—as a 7-year-old could. "Think of our brave soldiers in South Africa," her mother chided, preferring stoicism in public. "I don't want to be a brave soldier," Agatha sobbed. "I want to be a coward."

The slow one of the family, she lived in a world of fantasy, surrounded by imaginary broods of people and animals. Sister Madge wrote short stories, even a few plays. "I personally had no ambition," Agatha noted. "I knew that I was not very good at anything." Brother Monty called her "scrawny chicken."

School was not part of her regimen, except for brief lessons in her teens, when she attended a local girls' school to study arithmetic (liked that), grammar (couldn't see the point of it) and composition (she showed too much imagination). If she was put to writing about autumn, then suddenly there was Curlytail the Pig and a smashing beechnut party for his pals. She dreamed of becoming a concert pianist but was terrified of performing in public.

Once when Agatha needed something to occupy her mind—she was in bed recovering from influenza—her mother suggested she, like Madge, write a story, and gave her an exercise book that happened to have a few laundry notes at one end. In no time at all the story was finished—"The House of Beauty." Additional stories went off to magazines, with pseudonyms: Mack Miller, Nathaniel Miller, Sydney West, Mostyn Grey. Back came rejections. Then, at about 19, she tried a novel, set in Cairo, where—after her father's death—she and her mother had spent some months. Midway she became dissatisfied and started another novel, whose heroine was deaf. This complicated the dialogue. Since both stories were set in Cairo, she combined them.

Her mother suggested showing it to a neighbor, novelist Eden Phillpotts. He sent back advice: "Try and cut all moralisations out of your novels; you are

Israel Shenker lives in Scotland and writes often for SMITHSONIAN *on a variety of subjects that range from sculpture to English country houses to umbrellas.*

much too fond of them, and nothing is more boring to read. . . . You have two plots here, rather than one, but that is a beginner's fault; you soon won't want to waste plots in such a spendfree way." Agatha thought she could write a detective story. "I don't think you could do it," Madge said. "They are very difficult to do."

In the years just before World War I, Agatha almost became engaged to an army colonel, then to a naval sub-lieutenant, and in fact to a major who went to serve abroad. But then, when she was 22, she met Archie Christie, a dashing subaltern who was going into the Royal Flying Corps, where he earned flying certificate No. 245. When war broke out he served heroically in France. During Christmas leave, in 1914, they married. Now Agatha Christie, she worked as a practical nurse, tending the wounded. Then she transferred to the hospital dispensary, picking up the basics on poisons as well as medicines. With lots of spare time at the dispensary, she decided to try that detective story. She saw a black-bearded man on a tram and imagined a murderer with a black beard. Also on the tram was "a large, hearty woman talking loudly about spring bulbs. I liked the look of her, too."

What sort of detective should she have? He should not be like Sherlock Holmes—"the one and only." Nor like Arsène Lupin—"not my kind." Then she remembered a colony of Belgian refugees nearby. What about a retired Belgian police officer—short, in fact 5 feet 4, with an egg-shaped head, a luxuriant mustache, meticulous and very brainy? "He should have little grey cells of the mind—that was a good phrase: I must remember that—yes, he would have little grey cells." He would be Hercule (after all, this was a small man) Poirot.

All this had to be sorted out, along with her new life since the return of her husband, now a colonel posted home to the Air Ministry. After the war they had a daughter, Rosalind, and lived in a rented apartment in London. Meanwhile the Poirot novel had come back from publisher after publisher. Finally one, the Bodley Head, proved optimistic. Royalties would begin only after 2,000 copies were sold. But the contract deserved a celebration, and the Christies went to the Palais de

With daughter, Rosalind, born in 1919, she seemed the very model of a proper and prosperous mother.

She married her first husband, much-decorated flier Archibald Christie, just at the start of World War I.

NEWS, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1926.

£100 REWARD.

WHERE IS MRS. CHRISTIE?

SEARCH FOR MISSING NOVELIST.

'DAILY NEWS' OFFER.

The "Daily News" offers £100 reward to the first person furnishing us with information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts, if alive, of Mrs. Christie.

MRS. AGATHA CHRISTIE, the writer of mystery novels, disappeared from her home at Sunningdale, Berkshire, on Friday

MRS. AGATHA CHRISTIE.

quiries by the police, however, have failed to establish the address at which she is supposed to have called.

At 9.45 she packed an attache case and left in her two-seater, saying

A still-mysterious episode in Christie's life occurred in 1926 when she disappeared after abandoning her car (above). A national search followed, with lavish press coverage, until she was found in a hotel under an assumed name, apparently a victim of amnesia.

Danse in Hammersmith. "There was a third party with us, though I did not know it," she wrote. "Hercule Poirot, my Belgian invention, was hanging round my neck, firmly attached there like the old man of the sea." She earned £25 from the sale of serial rights.

Her second book began in a tearoom when she overheard the name Jane Fish. That struck her as entertaining, though she changed Fish to Finn. This one would be about spying. A third book followed, once more including Poirot's Watson, a Captain Hastings, shortchanged in the "grey cells" department. Soon the author felt shortchanged in the royalties department, and switched publishers—to Collins. By the time she had published the popular *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* in 1926, she was a celebrated writer.

The Christies took a house in the suburbs, where Archie could indulge his passion for golf—and Agatha could suffer the loneliness and depression of the golf widow. Signing a check, she couldn't remember her own name. Was it Blanche Amory, from Thackeray's *Pendennis*? Was it Amory or Amery? In 1926 her husband announced that he had fallen in love with another woman—a Miss Neele—and wanted a divorce. Agatha was distraught.

On the night of December 3, she disappeared from home. The next morning her car was found abandoned. A nationwide search began. Agatha's fame grew as day succeeded mystifying day, with lots of newsprint confusing the trail, and many sightings—none genuine. Volunteers combed the undergrowth; lakes and streams were dragged; grappling irons failed to produce her body. Clairvoyants were equally helpful, as were dogs of innumerable breeds. Suspicion fell on Archie Christie, who said he did not think she had committed suicide—if she had wanted to commit suicide she would surely have opted for poison.

In a hotel in Harrogate, a chambermaid pointed out to the manager the similarity between the handbag in newspaper photographs and that belonging to the woman from room 5, registered as Teresa Neele. The manager told the chambermaid that hotel employees should be discreet: say nothing. But two members of the hotel dance band saw a resemblance between the newspaper photograph and Teresa Neele, and told police. Archie was summoned and recognized the woman as his wife.

The story—or part of it—then came out. Agatha couldn't remember about her car, but had eventually taken a train to London, where she'd seen a poster advertising Harrogate. Having been influenced by her grandmother's advice never to be without handy cash, she had hundreds of pounds in a money belt. She remembered playing bridge with fellow guests at the hotel and discussing the disappearance of a famous novelist. Two doctors announced she had suffered "genuine loss of memory." On their advice she saw a psychiatrist. There were still those who thought it was a publicity stunt, though her character and inordinate shyness made this unlikely. Some suggested she plotted the whole escapade to get even with Archie, or perhaps as a test run for her next book. In her 1977 autobiography, she appears to have suffered a second bout of amnesia, passing silently over the adventure. But who is naive enough to believe that a skillful writer

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Agatha Christie did 33 books with Belgian supersleuth Hercule Poirot and 12 more with Miss Jane Marple, who was English; there were many stage and screen versions made of them. Surrounding Joan Hickson, as Miss Marple in the public TV series, are (clockwise from top left):

Charles Laughton (right), 1928, as first stage Poirot, in an adaptation of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*; Albert Finney in the 1974 film *Murder on the Orient Express*; Angela Lansbury in *The Mirror Crack'd*; and Margaret Rutherford in the 1962 film *Murder, She Said*.

of fiction can possibly write an honest autobiography?

In 1928 she divorced her husband (who married the genuine Neele) and set out to earn her living by writing. She traveled by train to Baghdad, subsequently returning to stay with an archaeologist and his wife at a dig at Ur. The archaeologist's young assistant, Max Mallowan, was delegated to accompany her to local sights, and they got on well. Back in England, Mallowan proposed. He was 15 years younger and Catholic. Agatha considered it madness to think of marriage.

When she finally agreed, he asked if she would mind a future with a man whose profession was "digging up the dead." "I *adore* corpses and stiffs," she replied. As to religious differences: "I can be converted on my deathbed and die an R.C. . . . where shall we be buried?" Because the Catholic Church would not recognize the marriage, Mallowan left the church.

Having exacted a promise from her husband that he would not play golf, she accompanied him partway to a Middle Eastern dig. With her was a new passport with birthdate adjusted to a more pleasing fiction. Since she was not allowed to stay at this dig, her husband subsequently found employment with another archaeologist so that she could share the primitive life.

She was never an all-work-and-no-play writer with office hours. Given an excuse—housework, a meal with friends, a night at the theater, a walk in the country—she welcomed it. Clues were not office-bound: heroes and villains could emerge anywhere. Before Poirot could say "*Sapristi!*" there was even a rival for primacy in an amateur sleuth named Miss Marple, who lived in the quintessentially English village of St. Mary Mead and was richly endowed in "grey cells."

Variety was the spice of death

Miss Jane Marple came to printed life partly because Agatha Christie had enjoyed portraying a gossipy, acidulous spinster in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Variety was the spice of death: the lighthearted thriller, the intricately plotted mystery. For a holiday from crime, Agatha Christie—she kept that name for her detective novels—wrote a series of romantic novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. The first, *Giant's Bread*, was published in 1930, and another, *Absent in the Spring*, took three days to write and became one of her favorites. When an American reviewer betrayed the true identity of the author, Westmacott-Christie was not amused.

During World War II Mallowan was sent to the Middle East, where his archaeologist's Arabic proved useful. Graham Greene asked Agatha Christie if she would like to do propaganda work. She decided she lacked "the single-mindedness to see only one side of the case." Instead, she went back to dispensing medicine and clues. Daughter Rosalind married Hubert Prichard, a Welsh officer in the regular army. Mathew Prichard, Agatha Christie's only grandchild, was born in 1943, and word soon arrived that Prichard had been killed in action.

After the war, Mallowan became Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology at the University of London. With his wife, he returned to archaeology in Iraq, digging at Nimrud, once military capital of Assyria. As team photographer she helped clean and register the finds. She was also camp poet, tossing off verses there and back home, in the style of Lewis Carroll:

> But I was thinking of a plan
> To kill a millionaire
> And hide the body in a van
> Or some large Frigidaire.

Her biographer Janet Morgan maintained that Christie "could tap her readers' deeply held fantasies." The motives were simple—hate, jealousy, greed, revenge, ambition—and so was the prose. Sentences were straightforward, chapters short. "If I could write like Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark or Graham Greene," Christie suggested, "I should jump to heaven with delight, but. . . . I have learnt that I am *me*, that I can do the things that, as one might put it, *me* can do, but I cannot do the things that *me* would like to do."

Shunning a few distractions, she managed to produce a book or two a year. In all, there were 78 crime novels (33 with Poirot, 12 with Miss Marple), 6 Westmacotts, 4 nonfiction works including a diverting account of roughing it at the digs (*Come, Tell Me How You Live* by Agatha Christie Mallowan), 20 plays and about 150 short stories. Her publishers made it appear that her 80th book was published for her 80th birthday. Max Mallowan was laureate that day:

> Yours is the role of Morality Play
> Wherein all the wicked find crime doesn't pay.
> Blackmailer, killer, scoundrel and crook
> Sooner or later are brought down to book.

In his own *Memoirs*, Max wrote of his wife's "elusiveness . . . a defensive resistance to inquisitive probing, an inbuilt armour off which any questionnaire was liable to glance like a spent arrow." She said that "the most blessed thing about being an author is that you do it in private and *in your own time*. It can worry you, bother you, give you a headache; you can go nearly mad trying to arrange your plot the way it should go and you know it could go; *but*—you do not have to stand up and make a fool of yourself in public."

In 1947 when the BBC was preparing an 80th-birthday tribute to Queen Mary the Queen Mother, she suggested she would like to hear something by Agatha Christie. The royal wish led to a 30-minute radio play—

Three Blind Mice. Expanded for the stage, it became a thriller called *The Mousetrap*. The play opened in London in November 1952 and has been running there ever since. About 35 years ago, it became the longest-running play in British history. With every performance it seems less likely that anyone will ever build a better mousetrap. The drama has eight characters and has been delivering surprises for so long that it has employed 238 actors and actresses and 111 understudies. Every night the play brings off its culminating surprise and then, during curtain calls, the audience is enjoined not to reveal the denouement—since, oddly enough, there are still a few people on the planet who haven't seen *The Mousetrap*. Says grandson Mathew Prichard: "It's a very good, short, simple piece of general entertainment suitable for everyone from a 13-year-old to anyone 85 years old. If you don't happen to like musicals, and don't want to be shocked by sex or violence or educated by Shakespeare, it's ideal."

His grandmother gave him the rights to *Mousetrap*, which he eventually sold to the play's producer. When British taxes were much more draconian, a loophole allowed authors to "sell" themselves to a public company. Booker—a British conglomerate that grows mushrooms in England, farms salmon in Scotland, breeds turkeys in America, sells cosmetics in France, builds hotels in Mauritius and annually sponsors the Booker Prize, the home country's most-celebrated literary award—purchased 64 percent of Agatha Christie. The remaining 36 percent was reserved for her heirs—daughter, grandson and great-grandchildren. Booker Entertainment (a division of the company) also owns the rights to novelist Georgette Heyer and playwright Robert Bolt, and to the James Bond books of Ian Fleming. Last year, American publisher Harper & Row paid $9.6 million to acquire the paperback rights to 33 Agatha Christie titles—for just eight years.

Booker Entertainment is headed by Prichard. "Everyone assumes it's a matter of counting checks at 9 in the morning and going home at 10:30," he said, as he sat in his 27th-floor London office at 8:30 in the morning, sipping tea from the office machine. Prichard hastened to explain that there was the arduous matter of rejecting unsuitable bids, noting: "We try and ration the material so that there is constantly a stream of it, rather than a flock and then nothing after five years."

Brian Stone, who has become literary agent for Agatha Christie, said: "When I took over she was rather a ropy property that was out-of-date and slightly pathetic. Theater producers were getting away with 5½-percent royalty [instead of 10]. Staging was appalling and so were the returns." He encouraged television producers to stress stylized nostalgia. "Her books give you a civilized, pleasant idea of a comfortable society that doesn't change very much—a feeling of intense coziness. It's family viewing."

These are the polite mysteries in which, as a reviewer wrote in the *New York Times*, detectives mind their manners, settings are gracious, plots are intelligent. Agatha Christie called it a matter of principle to "loathe the tough kind of thriller."

"Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?"

"I did not care for Agatha Christie and I hope never to read another of her books," critic Edmund Wilson once wrote. He had plowed through a total of one book—*Death Comes as the End*—atypically set in ancient Egypt, which allowed for precious little nostalgia. In a famous essay, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" Wilson argued that "her writing is of a mawkishness and banality which seem to me literally impossible to read. You cannot *read* such a book, you run through it to see the problem worked out. . . ." "Of course," his friend Vladimir Nabokov agreed, "Agatha is unreadable. . . ."

Poet and critic W. H. Auden confessed: "For me, as for many others, the reading of detective stories is an addiction like tobacco or alcohol." Asked about writing poetry, Dylan Thomas said he'd much rather lie in a hot bath, sucking boiled sweets, reading Agatha Christie. The Queen herself—Agatha Christie, that is—saw her role as seeking to provide entertainment and called herself "an incredible sausage machine."

In 1968 Max Mallowan was knighted, and in 1971 his wife—no "scrawny chicken" by then—was created a Dame Commander of the British Empire. Death came to her five years later. (Mallowan married again in 1977 and died the next year.) There were no suspicious circumstances, and every reason to believe that Agatha Christie had earned her royal rights to immortality and the occasional decorous firework.

In 1972 Christie, tapped for Madame Tussaud's, has her hair matched for the wig later to be worn by her wax figure. At right, playing for her second husband, archaeologist and professor Max Mallowan, Agatha shows off a lifelong talent never exploited.

The Queen of Crime, 84, bows while touching hands with the Queen of England at the fancy film premiere of *Murder on the Orient Express*. Three years before, in 1971, Elizabeth had honored Christie by making her a Dame Commander of the British Empire.

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Painting a 20-by-60-foot L.A. billboard, artist Gus Pacheco adds a highlight to his colossal checkered cab. Detail of headlight edge (opposite) shows what artist sees as he works to get effect of realism at a distance.

By Doug Stewart

In Los Angeles, billboards are seen as high art

The artists who create the hand-painted masterpieces along Sunset Strip use a technique that once guided Michelangelo

In a cavernous loft in a rundown part of central Los Angeles, Gus Pacheco is well into his third day of painting what is surely the world's largest lemon wedge. From one end to the other, the lemon probably measures 25 feet. The finished oil painting, a product of Patrick Media's sprawling billboard-painting studio, will exhort passers-by to sample the lemon atop their favorite seafood dish. Faintly visible on the unpainted parts of Pacheco's huge board is an intricate pattern of little squiggles, blobs and craters in charcoal gray. A gallery artist might assume that billboard painters are nothing but color-by-number hacks, slavishly filling in outlines, but watching Gus Pacheco refutes that idea.

As soon as Pacheco begins laying paint onto the plywood—his palette is seven large globs of yellow, with lavenders and pinkish grays for contrast—the guidelines underneath, first of all, are quickly obliterated. The lemon's essence is in his head. Pacheco has to know how to make a 25-foot lemon look as succulent and bitter as the 3-inch real thing. Glancing occasionally at his model, a photograph of a lemon, Pacheco is now wiping away long streaks of wet paint here and

Photographs by Rob Lewine

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SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: SMOKING CAUSES LUNG CANCER, HEART DISEASE AND EMPHYSEMA
ITALIAN BOYS
Clothing that speaks your language.
WELCOME TO WEST HOLLYWOOD

Marlboro Man looms over landscape. Banned from TV, tobacco companies are big billboard advertisers.

there with a wadded-up rag. Then, with energetic, full-arm strokes of a one-inch brush, he adds S's and half-moons in yellow-white over the smears. From up close, the strokes look like strands of light-yellow kelp floating up from a luminous sea bottom. From a distance, they miraculously reveal themselves as highlights on the moist, corrugated membrane of the lemon's flesh. The section looks translucent and taut, the central stem visible just behind the membrane. This lemon wedge may be the size of a small swimming pool, but every time I step back 30 feet to take it all in, my mouth puckers.

The vast majority of billboards coast to coast are not painted this way, one at a time. They're printed from photographs in huge batches and hung like wallpaper. In Los Angeles, however, hand-painted billboards are an indigenous folk art, their fashioners unsung master craftsmen. Denounced and hounded in much of the country, billboards in general have long enjoyed an exalted status in Los Angeles' public life. "To deprive the city of them," wrote the late Reyner Banham, a historian and architecture critic, "would be like depriving San Gimignano of its towers or the city of London its Wren steeples." More prosaically, Allen Rossi, creative director of Gannett Outdoor in Southern California, explains: "Billboards go hand in hand with all the damn cars we've got out here."

In L.A., a sizable minority of billboards, including nearly all the biggest ones, are hand painted. Even billboards for Kodak *film* are hand painted here. In the eyes of many advertisers and ad agencies, ink-on-paper boards are simply too drab to do their products justice. They insist on the hot vibrancy of paint. Highly trained display artists like Gus Pacheco, some earning more than $20 an hour, keep these advertisers happy with their outsize masterpieces. The most exciting boards, says Allen Rossi, himself a former billboard artist, are the hand-painted jobs on Sunset Boulevard. "They're spectacular," he says. "You won't get a yawn out of anything on the Sunset Strip."

Billboards here start high and go higher

Rossi may be prejudiced, but he's right on that count. The one-and-a-half-mile stretch of Sunset Boulevard running west from Fairfax Avenue in Hollywood to the Beverly Hills line is a dazzling botanical garden of towering hand-painted extravaganzas. (Despite the boosts they've given to so many of its residents' careers, billboards are taboo in Beverly Hills proper.) The billboards here start high and go higher, screaming for attention above the palm trees and competing boards. There are hand-painted billboards for rock concerts at the Hollywood Bowl, Liza at Vegas, Arthur Murray Dance Studios, L. Ron Hubbard, and

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more movies than some people will ever see in a lifetime. Caesar's Palace is represented by a Roman chariot whose wheels turn, the whole structure supported by fake classical columns. Banished from TV, a full-length cutout of the Marlboro Man looms like Godzilla 70 feet over the sidewalk. The smattering of boards printed from photographs look flat and washed-out by comparison.

Making paintings this big look not only natural but appealing takes a certain amount of care. "If you make a mistake," says one veteran painter, "it'll show up bigger than you've ever seen it before." To see how it's done, I first pay a visit to the darkroom at Patrick Media Group. Patrick and Gannett Outdoor are the two biggest billboard companies in L.A., and in the country. Understandably, Patrick's darkroom is bigger than most spaces of that description—it's the size of a gymnasium. Two huge walls are covered with a fine copper mesh like window screening. On one of the walls, butcher paper has been draped against the mesh in four-foot strips. Two slides of a new billboard are being projected dimly, side by side, against the paper: a shiny new car tools down a road at night, above it the words "More Room. More Varoom." (In billboard design, any headline longer than seven words is considered loquacious; drivers are moving too fast to read more.)

Standing on an electric lift against the wall, a man in a baseball warmup jacket quietly traces whatever hard edges he can find with a tool that resembles a soldering iron. Wherever he presses down, sparks jump between his electric pencil and the wire mesh, burning tiny holes in the paper caught in the middle. With loose sweeps of his arm, the man divides the car's windshield with three large squiggles. The photograph of the car is largely amorphous—all headlights and waxy surfaces—so the burner, a trained artist, is winging it. In the darkness, the electric pencil's tip flickers and snaps like a sparkler as he works.

"Something like this Michelangelo used to do," says Greg Baird, the burly darkroom supervisor. "Of course, he didn't have electricity. He used a little roller—like a pizza cutter, only serrated." Next, the perforated paper is tacked over the blank billboard and "pounced," or rubbed with a small bag of powdered graphite. Once transferred onto a board in this way, the three long squiggles on this car's windshield will show the painter where darks shade into lights. Clearly, much is left to the painter's judgment. Moreover, on the pounced boards, try as I may, I see no little numbers anywhere.

Doug Stewart last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on the sewage-fed marshes of Arcata, California, in April 1990 and on toys in December 1989.*

From slide projected on paper, Greg Baird burns outline with sparking electric pencil as a guide for painter.

Out in Patrick's two hangarlike painting studios, nearly 40 billboards-in-progress are lined up in tight rows. Most of the painted boards are a standard 14-by-48-foot size, called bulletins. (Nationwide, the standard pasted-up board is the unprepossessing 10-by-20-foot poster.) Although some of Patrick's bulletins are painted in situ, the majority are painted here in the studios, then trucked to the site in panels and hoisted into place by crane. Wandering down the canyons between the rows, I'm struck by how meticulously the painters work. None of them is slapping on paint like a housepainter. A gallon and a half of oil-based paint is all it takes to cover a full-size bulletin, which means that a painter who takes a week to complete a board (and avoids overlapping) is doling out half a teaspoon of paint per minute.

Up close, the scale of everything is disorienting. Two light-blue baby booties the size of vans dangle on a field of white. Nearby, a model with a denim bustier and windblown hair like an uprooted tree sits pensively on some rocks. A button on her jacket sleeve is the size of a bagel.

"When I first walked in here, I was so scared, I was shaking," says artist John Thongnoi, taking a break

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This classic 1939 billboard, an eyecatcher for the Forest Lawn cemetery, was executed by Gino Raffaelli.

Now 89, Raffaelli painted his first billboard in 1920. What he worked on didn't matter, he says. It was all art.

from an airline billboard that shows a lone woman surrounded by empty beach (p. 106). "Some heads are 12 feet high, maybe 10 feet wide. I was thinking, 'How in the world am I going to fill in all that space?' " On the board he's now painting, the burner evidently threw up his hands—most of its 20-by-60-foot expanse is as white as milk. Thongnoi is on his own. He has to paint colors and shapes that will read not just "sand" but "fine, hot, sun-bleached sand"; not just "water," but "clear, limpid, 80-degree water." To accomplish this, he's given the beach a flesh-toned leopard-skin effect. The water is sinuous horizontal strokes of blues and greens. Everything is soft, vague, suggestive, but from a distance it will look real enough to make people call their travel agents.

A pair of boards at one end of the main studio is undergoing a different kind of transformation. Workmen are gluing down vinyl strips that have already been painted. Up close, the full-color photomural of Malaysia is composed of grainy vertical stripes, like coarse corduroy. These are the much-ballyhooed computer-painted billboards. Their boosters, citing the 55/500 Rule ("At 55 miles an hour and 500 feet, who's gonna know the difference?"), have been predicting that computer paint will do to hand painting what the steam hammer did to John Henry. So far, it hasn't happened. Computer painting remains expensive, and its output is bland and washed-out compared with good hand painting. "It's like putting a magnifying glass in front of a TV," one artist confides. "It destroys the picture."

A successfully scaled-up picture is one that re-creates the exact look of the sketch or photograph an ad agency provides. Attempts by painters to improve on the sketch are frowned upon but are sometimes necessary. In the middle of the main shed, Art Pastusak is finishing up a rather hackneyed ad showing a gigantic turkey club sandwich next to an equally gigantic jar of mayonnaise. In the sketch, the toast looks like scorched Wonder Bread; the meat could be anything. "I went a little more colorful than the sketch, and I played down the burnt," Pastusak tells me, pocketing the brass door-peeper he uses to survey his work without climbing down from his lift. "If the client complains about it, I'll go back and burn it."

In his office around back, 69-year-old Joseph Blackstock, the company's semiretired research director and archivist, thinks the mayonnaise ad is terrific, scorched bread or no. "That mayonnaise jar is 40 times life size," Blackstock points out. "It's package identification at its very best! It's showing the luscious look of food on a grand scale." Blackstock is an impassioned champion of billboards as a thrilling and vital mainstay of American commerce. He continually darts out from behind his desk to hand me scrapbooks or to lift framed photographs from his wall. One of his favorites shows Wilshire Boulevard just west of Fairfax as a rustic two-lane road with Model Ts trundling along and tall grass growing on either side, the whole scene dominated by an enormous hyperrealistic tire. For a billboard to be effective, Blackstock says, "its message has to be brief and bold, and it has to use the brightest and most contrasting colors possible. All the great ones have had that, and the poor ones have not. It's that simple."

Blackstock takes strong exception to the notion that artists, like James Rosenquist, who move from billboard painting to gallery art are somehow unusual (SMITHSONIAN, December 1986). Numerous billboard artists have been embraced by the art world, he says. "Leeteg, for example, was originally a billboard artist in our Sacramento studio." Who's Leeteg? I ask. Blackstock

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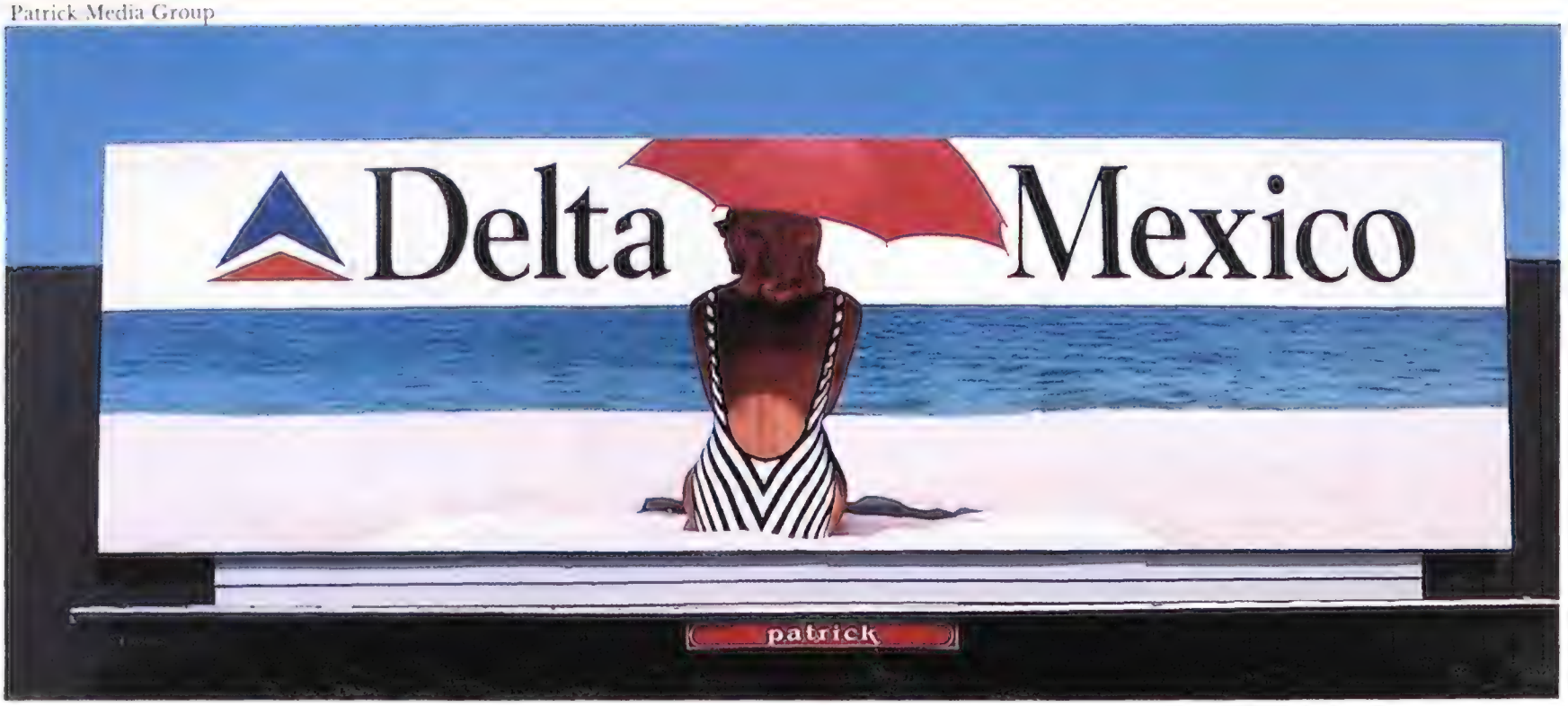

Creating this extra-large billboard near L.A. airport, John Thongnoi started with an outline of the figure, the horizon and water lines. Guided by the burned-in tracings of the electric pencil, the rest was up to him.

looks at me for a second or two. "*Edgar* Lecteg? He's the man who revived the art of painting on black velvet! Some of his stuff sells for more than $30,000 now here on the Coast." Blackstock begins reeling off names of billboard artists who struck out on their own, including one man who went on to design postage stamps, of all things. "They all have a flair for boldness and brevity that they wouldn't have had otherwise." He notes that a 70-foot-long historical mural adorning the walls of a meeting room in the county courthouse in Santa Barbara was painted in the 1920s by Dan Sayre Groesbeck, a former outdoor display artist. "And it's billboard art—red! yellow! orange! black! To be honest, it just knocks you backwards."

One of the men credited with pulling billboards out of the realm of sign painting and into the world of art, however mercenary its intent, is Gino Raffaelli. A spry, nattily dressed 89-year-old, Raffaelli began painting billboards in Los Angeles back in 1920. In those days, he tells me when I visit his immaculate house in Bell, the words "billboard" and "artist" were never uttered in the same breath. Most outdoor display ads were just big posters full of lettering. "They used to be put up like postage stamps all the way around the block," he says. "You thought you were in a nuthouse."

Raffaelli was trained as a fine artist, and he convinced his clients that fine art was what they wanted—high pictorial, as the industry came to call it. Raffaelli didn't go in for fancy stuff, just straight-ahead realism. Whenever possible, he painted his billboards from life. If he was painting steak, he'd first bring home a free sample and study it as it cooked. "I didn't give a damn about the sketch," he says. "They'd give me a sketch, but I painted meat." Raffaelli shows me a photograph of a billboard he painted for Forest Lawn cemetery in 1939 (p. 104). It appears to be a spotlighted marble sculpture of a mother and child, but it was simply paint on plywood. Raffaelli claims people would stop their cars on the highway just to look at it. He adds that he could easily have spent another month bringing out the full texture of the marble. "If you paint silk," he says, summing up his artistic philosophy, "you should be able to tell how many bucks a yard it costs."

Harder to paint than silk or marble is the human face—especially the recognizable face of a Hollywood star. Only the top painters in a studio get to paint the stars. When Raffaelli hand painted 15 billboards of Jane Russell for Howard Hughes' *The Outlaw* in the mid-'40s, one after another, all 15 had to *be* Jane Russell. Says Ed Strang, head of scenic arts at Warner Bros. Studio, "It's not so hard if you're just cranking out 50 Jack Daniels billboards, but if you're painting a big star and people drive by and say, 'God, who *is* that?' then you're in trouble." In L.A., the stars themselves are likely to drive by, and occasionally boards have been repainted at their agents' behest. Some studios now use blowups of photographs for the stars' heads; the painters work around them.

On a balmy Sunday morning recently, I join Warner Bros.' ace pictorial artist and billboard painter, Don Hanson, on a scissorlift in the middle of a traffic triangle in Burbank. There, I watch him do what he does best: paint the stars. Looming over us is a monumental double portrait of Sylvester Stallone and Kurt Russell, appearing in the cop-buddy movie *Tango and Cash*. An animator from Disney, just up the street, wanders over with a friend to watch respectfully. "I can't imagine working on that scale," he breathes, shaking his head. "The skin tones!" says his friend. "The skin tones look so great!" From where I stand, only two feet

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from the paint, the skin tones look pretty awful. The pores on Stallone's forehead are unhealthy-looking smears of orange, off-white, copper and black. (Though most of the board has been pounced, the pores, hairs and other details are all up to Hanson.) The bags under Sly's right eye are elephant hide, if not rhinoceros. His hair is swamp vegetation. "It gets pretty abstract," Hanson agrees.

Hanson is an unpretentious fellow, soft-spoken and a bit shy. He's wearing an old flannel shirt and jeans, a purple L.A. Lakers cap, paint-spattered sneakers. Although, when asked, he refers to himself as an artist, not a painter, he's down-to-earth about his craft. "Even after 14 years, I'm amazed I have a job painting movie stars' heads," he says. His first billboard was for the original *Dirty Harry*. "I think I got to paint the knuckles on one of Clint Eastwood's hands," he says. Lately Hanson has had a virtual monopoly on Eastwood boards.

The billboard Hanson is finishing up today is one of the largest in Los Angeles: a thousand square feet, half again bigger than Patrick Media's standard bulletins. This is considered a prestige board, aimed not at selling movie tickets but at staring down agents, producers and studio executives, and at gratifying the stars themselves. "We paint these to fall into place at around 150 feet," says Hanson, sounding a lot like an artillery commander. "It's surprising how soft things have to be. If you paint a knife-edge right on the board, you stand back and it doesn't look real. It looks pasted on. That's one of the hardest things to learn about painting like this."

Even in Tinseltown, billboards have their opponents, although not every public outcry over outdoor display art is aimed at preventing it. From 1974 until four years ago, a 30-by-22-foot portrait known affectionately as the Old Lady of the Freeway graced a wall overlooking the Hollywood Freeway. When the landlord had it painted over with a YOUR AD HERE message, the accompanying phone number was immediately overloaded with irate calls, as Kent Twitchell, the man who painted the Freeway Lady, recalls with some satisfaction. Twitchell, an independent artist, doesn't consider himself a billboard painter. He specializes in large, hyperrealistic wall paintings of human figures, often with religious overtones. His paintings

Artist Kent Twitchell ("I'm not a billboard artist") leans from his ladder to add the background on his gargantuan mural, *Marathon Runners*, as car speeds by on San Diego Freeway near the Los Angeles airport.

don't scream for attention, but they do transfix the viewer. Like a practiced billboard artist, Twitchell relies on the shock value of bold colors and meticulous, lifelike modeling on a gargantuan scale.

I catch up with him at his work site, the shoulder of the San Diego Freeway off-ramp just north of the Los Angeles airport. When I arrive, he tosses me an orange highway-worker's vest from the back of his van and leads me to his work-in-progress, a panoramic mural of marathon runners that the City of Los Angeles Marathon Foundation has commissioned. "Actually, I put a lot of my friends in here. That man there," he says, pointing, "never ran in his life." Twitchell, 47, is an affable, outgoing man with long wavy blond hair that's turning gray. The wall he's painting is a freeway embankment, an unbroken rectangle of concrete 18 feet high and 236 feet wide. "It's the perfect wall," he says. "It looks exactly like it needs a work of art on it." Twitchell and his chiropractor-apprentice, Andy Lesko, have completed eight oversize marathoners so far, all pictured head-on, and 18 more are planned. High visibility is guaranteed—alongside us, 12 lanes of 70-mile-an-hour traffic thunder by in both directions. The painted runners look as though they are bursting out of the concrete and will momentarily sprint onto the freeway, trampling cars (below).

Instead of painting directly on the concrete, which he's always done before, Twitchell has chosen to paint most of the runners on thin sheets of acrylic resin in his studio. He then bonds the cutouts onto the concrete and seals them. He shows me an unpainted paper outline of the lead runner's upper body. It looks like a diabolical paint-by-number set. The contour lines on the runner's face are often only one-eighth inch apart, and there seem to be miles of them. The intricate penciled pattern of bumps and dimples and bony hillocks on another runner's extended right knee looks like a detailed relief map of the Rocky Mountains. "It's not just tracing," Twitchell says of his laborious outline technique. "If I did it again 100 times, I'd never end up with the same thing." Twitchell's color-by-number approach to fine art is obviously anything but a shortcut. He first developed it as an in joke, a reaction against what he saw as the pretentions of the art world. He has since grown to love its glittering, eye-teasing richness.

Today, Twitchell plans to fill in a section of the

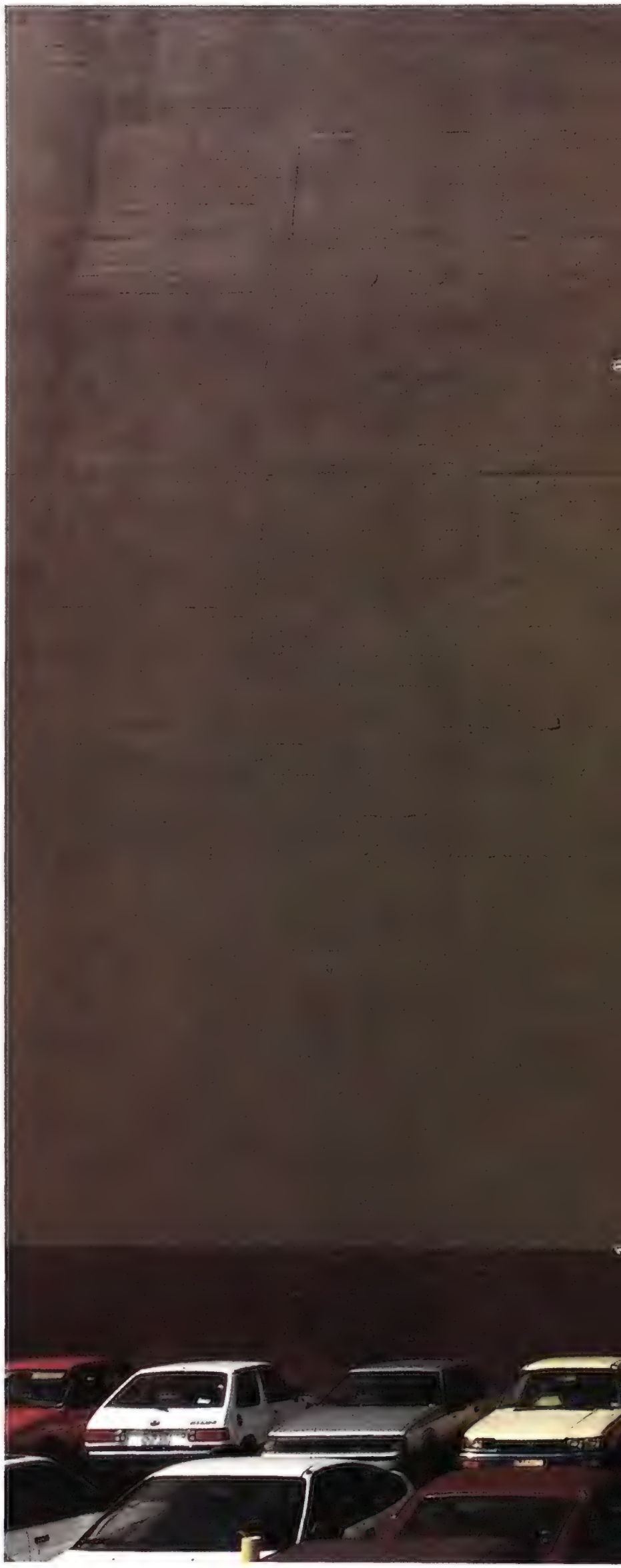
Twitchell worked on the mural for more than a year before finishing it this June. Not all 26 figures in completed work are really marathon runners. Some, he says, are friends of his who just look like runners.

mural that's been glued up unpainted. He sits cross-legged on the asphalt breakdown lane and, cradling a four-ounce baby food jar of paint in his left hand, begins dabbing peanut-size highlights into the shadows of a woman's outer thigh with his right. The notion that this man is painting even one part of a 236-by-18-foot wall with a quarter-inch brush is hard for me to think about. But he's happy. Motorcycles, delivery trucks and some of the world's fastest antique vans hurtle by a few feet away. A jumbo jet with its landing gear down roars directly overhead. "I really want this to be beautiful," Twitchell yells over to me. "L.A. is so big and spread out, and it has so many gray walls. It *needs* an oasis of beauty here and there." The best oases, he adds, are the unexpected ones. He loves triggering that moment of confusion when people come across an elaborate outdoor painting and can't figure out what it's selling.

Twitchell's masterpiece to date, his *Mona Lisa*, as he calls it, is a six-story portrait of fellow artist Edward Ruscha (right). The painting covers the side of the L.A. Job Corps Center in a grimy section downtown. "I lusted after that wall for two years," he says. "It was the best wall I'd ever seen. It had parking lots in front of it. It was like coming across the moors in England and suddenly there's Stonehenge, you know? It could be a monument." Twitchell scraped together funding, set up a window-washer's rig, and worked on the painting on and off for nine years. He completed it in 1987.

Stonehenge seems like an odd analogy, but when I come upon the *Edward Ruscha Monument* at Olympic Boulevard and Hill Street for the first time, the comparison is apt. It's big, it's powerful, and you wonder how anyone could have pulled it off. Seventy feet from head to ankle, Ruscha stands with his arms at his sides and gazes blankly at the viewer. The whorls of Ruscha's fingertips are heavy black lines an inch apart. The sharply pressed crease in his pants is a four-shade river of highlight that's eight inches wide at the hip. The red silky fabric of his shirt looks to be $22, maybe $23 a yard. As testimony to its status in the neighborhood, the painting is free of graffiti right down to the asphalt of the P and S Auto Park adjoining it.

Despite Twitchell's purist intentions, his colossus has its undeniable commercial impact, according to Louis Williams. Williams manages the parking lot down below. "I *love* that painting," he says with a proprietary air. "Everybody likes to park here and snap pictures of their car next to that wall. It's made this lot kind of popular."



Standing six stories tall, homage to Edward Ruscha was painted by Kent Twitchell over a span of nine years.

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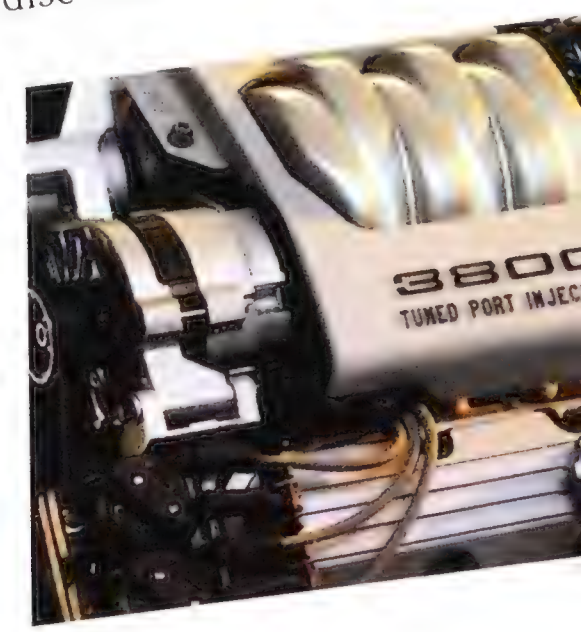

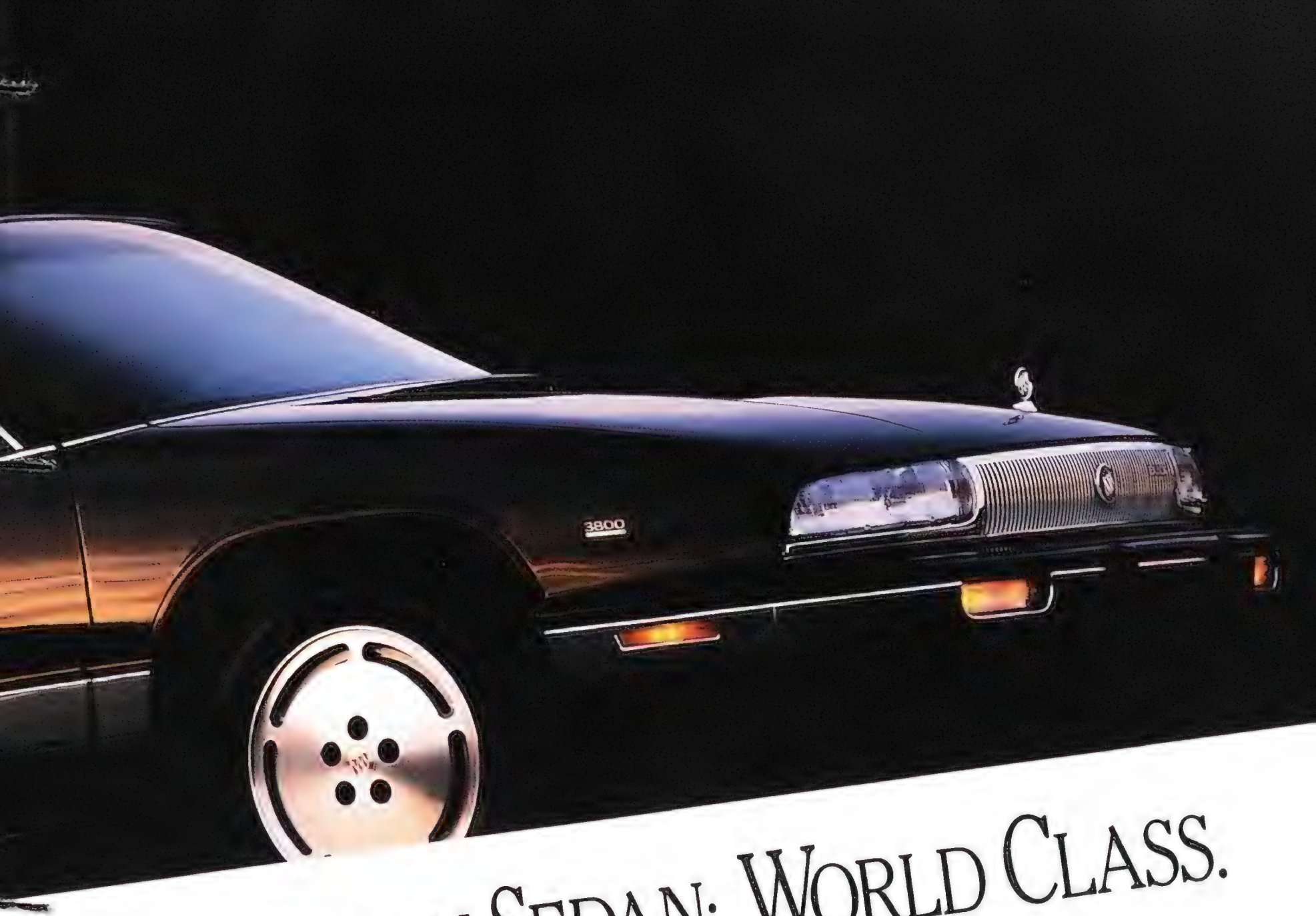

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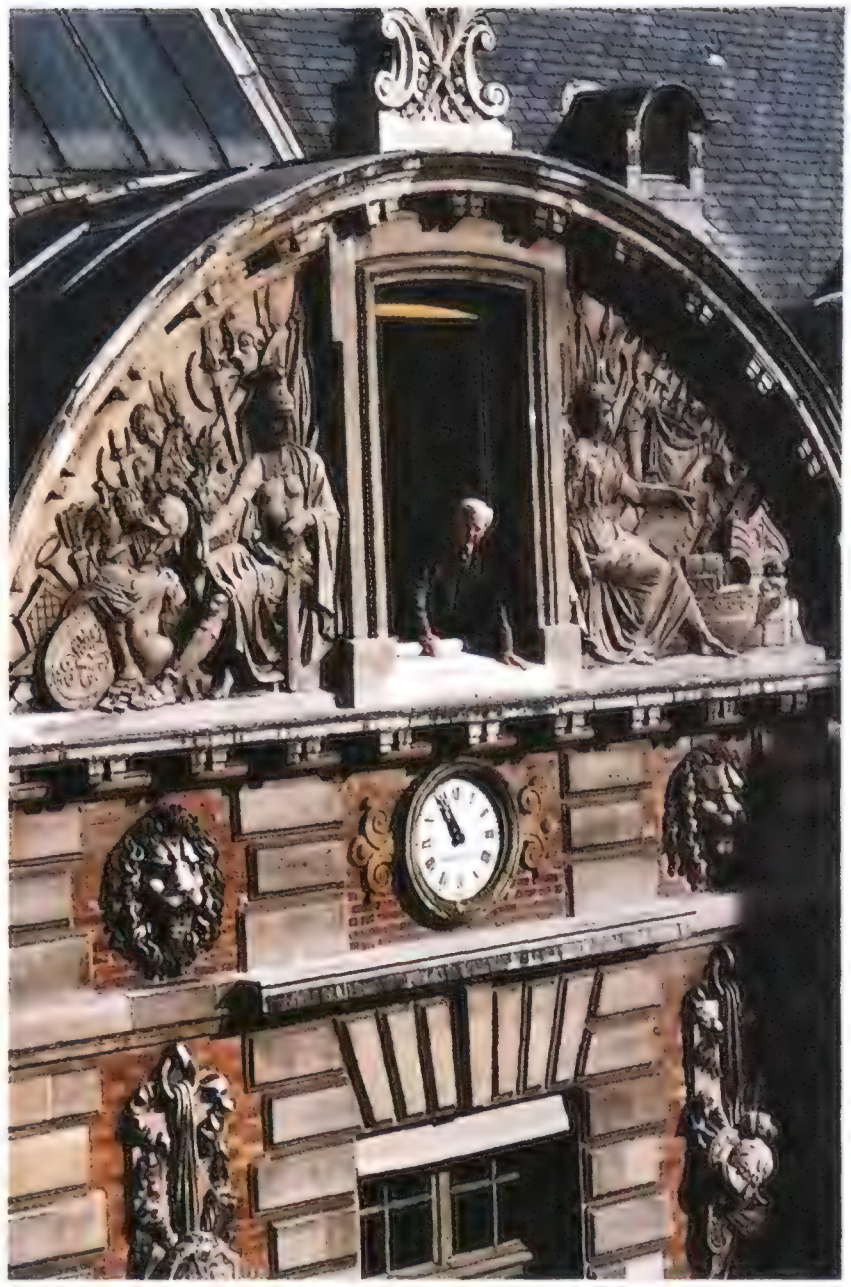
By Robert Wernick

A treasure house that holds one nation's memory

France's venerable Bibliothèque Nationale, home to everything from books to objets d'art, remains its premier library—at least until 1995



Historian-director Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie surveys domain from 17th-century palace in library complex.

In the beginning was a blast of polyphonic 16th-century prose: "For the preservation of good literature which through a long interval of time has been absent or the knowledge of [which] so blackened and covered with darkness that it could not be had or be found. . . ." And so on for 20 more lines, King François I of France in an edict of 1537 commanded the "obligatory deposit in his library at Blois of every book of a certain importance printed in his kingdom."

The edict was in part a police action, designed to smoke out printers and sellers of Protestant volumes in a France whose monarchs remained resolutely Catholic. But the king's official purpose was "the edification, nourishment and contentment of good and healthy minds which . . . have remained useless, bastardized and kept from their good and natural inclination." A Renaissance prince, François was passionately interested in the revival of learning, and he appointed the leading scholars of his day to look after his books in Blois.

The decree of 1537 marks the beginning of the *dépôt légal*, which over the centuries has called for the donation of at least one copy of everything printed in France—the word "printed" being catholically interpreted to include not only books, pamphlets and newspapers, but musical scores, phonograph records, posters, photographs, films, videocassettes—to the shelves of what till 1792 was the Royal Library and since then has been the National Library, France's famous, and sometimes infamous, Bibliothèque Nationale. What was once a room in the Château de Blois is now a great, rather grim, stone building fronting on the Rue de Richelieu in Paris and recognized by scholars everywhere as one of the great temples of learning.

Architect Henri Labrouste's splendid reading room, completed in 1868, offers a serene retreat for scholars.

Compared with similar temples—the British Library in London, the Library of Congress in Washington—the Bibliothèque does not rate at the top for size or efficiency. Handsomely supported by various monarchs, but subject to the whims of republics, at times generous, at times penurious, the Bibliothèque has always run its affairs with a certain aloof carelessness. When, for example, the distinguished historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (above) took over as director a couple of years ago, no one had counted the books on the shelves in decades. (He was, by the way, singularly fitted for the post. Years before becoming director, he came to know the Bibliothèque's precincts well, arriving at the courtyard entry by bicycle on countless mornings to pursue his own research.) He had an esti-

mate made: 9.5 million books, 1.5 million volumes of bound periodicals. (Comparable figures for the Library of Congress are 14.8 million and 5.2 million.)

Getting to see these volumes is no simple matter. Though the Bibliothèque has made a few experiments in opening its doors to all comers, the press of applicants in the past century has led to severe restrictions on the right of entry. You have to submit documents proving your bona fides as a serious scholar before you can get the card that lets you through the doors. And you have to prove that you can't obtain what you need anywhere else. Once you have made it that far, you have to fight your way through the idiosyncrasies of an administration that has evolved slowly over the centuries and has seemed steadfastly resistant to change.

Take the library authorities, for a start. Popular accounts have portrayed the Bibliothèque's guardians as less approachable, or accommodating, than Cerberus, presiding over their holdings with implacable efficiency. Even renowned scholars have braved this gauntlet at their peril. At one point, Fernand Braudel, one of France's, and the 20th century's, pre-

François I, the Bibliothèque's founding royal patron, cherished books and collected them on a lavish scale.

eminent historians, found himself, too, stonewalled by the powers that be. When the author of such masterworks as *Civilization and Capitalism* applied for a card renewal, he described his field of inquiry, succinctly, as "French history." The rebuff was swift and terrible: "Too general," admonished the rejection slip meted out to him.

Supplicants who arrive with more specific requests, however eccentric, may find a more sympathetic hearing. When, for instance, a former Miss Côte d'Azur, now elderly and wishing to relive youthful triumphs, asked for reportage on her 1920s beauty pageant, she was supplied promptly with newspaper accounts from Nice, photograph-illustrated, of course.

In fact, working as a Bibliothèque librarian has often proved a labor of love. A report from revolutionary days describes the difficulties faced by the devoted band who kept the great machine of learning going: "Almost all the service is performed with ladders . . . on a floor which the cleanliness necessary to the preservation of books makes extremely slippery; it is on this glassy surface that the staff must continuously walk, climb up, climb down, stretch up, lean down, to reach the books, with mind and body in a perpetual tension so as not to forget the number being asked for and not to lose your balance. If, close to your goal, you forget the one, you have to do everything all over again; if you lose the other you are exposing yourself to severe injury by falling from a ladder or a balcony, as happened last year to M. Chevret."

A confounding classification system

The 1930s introduced a system of pneumatic tubes that makes the task of getting the right volume to the reader in a reasonable amount of time less aleatory, but in other respects the Bibliothèque has remained proudly archaic. The classification system, fixed in the 17th century, has received only minimal changes since. The library's holdings are arranged in 29 categories, each category designated by an arbitrarily assigned letter or letter-number combination. "B" signifies liturgical works, for example, while "O2" denotes Asian history. "Y" indicates poetry, and "Z" everything that didn't fit elsewhere. Until the current head of the books department, Jacqueline Sanson, arrived on the scene, each of these letters formed an autonomous department, so that if the employee in charge of, say, "N"—English history—called in sick, there was no way to get a volume of English history off the shelves that day. Under a new power-sharing scheme, the person in charge of "L"—French history—or "R"—philosophy—can be allowed to take over temporarily.

In order to get the classification number of the books you are looking for, you may have to consult not

Collection of erotica, categorized under the heading "*Enfer*," or "Hell," is stored in rare books department.

A librarian retrieves a volume from shelves lining hemicycle apse that overlooks expanse of reading room.

one catalog, but four or five. You start with the main catalog, begun as a masterpiece of 19th-century scholarship, and published in 231 volumes between 1897 and 1981. You might press on through several other indexes, perhaps the cards kept in file drawers or the 27-volume index for the 1960s. Or you might consult the 1970s index, or the one from the 1980s. Fortunately, help is on the way—a new, up-to-the-minute electronic catalog that is working its way backward through the years and as of this fall should cover everything acquired since 1970.

For confirmed devotees of the Bibliothèque, minor inefficiencies and inconveniences are of little importance. For them, the Bibliothèque outranks all its rivals in atmosphere, ambience, the rich glow of the past in which scholarship finds it so congenial to flourish. Voltaire himself called the library "the noblest monument of France."

The main reading room, a masterpiece of cast-iron construction, with its slender columns upholding nine cupolas that filter in the daylight, was designed by the architect Henri Labrouste and completed in 1868. Anyone who has earned the right to settle into one of its 360 seats, surrounded by 40,000 volumes, in a religious hush broken only by the scratch of pens in notebooks, may well feel that he is on sacred ground.

And, in the geography of the mind, perhaps one is. The Bibliothèque has always held its own romance—as a place to think, to dream, even to lay the foundations for a creative revolution. In the prints department, one has only to peruse the visitor's register to recall a procession of genius. All the signatures are scrawled there—Delacroix, Géricault, Manet, Rodin, Matisse, Chagall, and on and on—of artists come to study and revere the masters before setting off in pursuit of the new. Some researchers, of course, arrived there with more frivolous intent. Empress Eugénie, Napoléon III's wife and a legendary fashion plate, often appeared once invitations to a masked ball had been dispatched. She pored over historical prints, noting the details of past beauties and their splendid gowns, in order to instruct her own seamstresses.

For anyone venturing beyond the familiar territory of the reading room or the prints department, there is a jumble of unexpected treasures. The Bibliothèque has grown up haphazard, continually receiving miscellaneous gifts, continually bursting out of restricted space. In the 16th century it moved from Blois to Fontainebleau to successive locations in Paris. Finally, in 1721, the library settled into new quarters on the Rue de Richelieu, in the former palace of Cardinal Mazarin, powerful minister to the court of France. Once there it expanded from room to room, floor to floor, building to building, till by the 19th century it

Robert Wernick, who resides for part of each year in Paris, has covered matters Gallic, from Roquefort cheese to ill-fated Philippe Egalité, for SMITHSONIAN.

France's revered, resplendent Bibliothèque

A trove of images by the portraitist François Clouet includes a wary, self-possessed Henri de Navarre, 1572.

occupied an entire outsize city block. It had taken more than a hundred years of pleas, petitions and bureaucratic maneuvering to squeeze out the other occupants—even the Paris Bourse was displaced.

You are never sure when you open a door what you will come across: a monumental marble staircase, a gallery with mythological paintings on the ceiling, a room containing the bronze throne of the seventh-century Merovingian monarch Dagobert I. Or even precious volumes from the first royal libraries, assembled by Charles V and Louis XI during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Some of the more eccentric holdings—dried lizards, petrified mushrooms, a rhinoceros horn—have long since been dispatched to other museums, but today's visitor will still find curiosities of every description: imperial Roman cameos, Charlemagne's chess set, composer Charles Gounod's baton, "Solomon's cup" (which is really a bowl made for the Persian king Chosroes I in the sixth century), 23,000 vintage records collected by eminent jazz scholar Charles Delaunay. The treasures are so splendid and in such staggering array as to defy description.

Here are two of Mozart's sonatas for keyboard and violin—published when he was 8 years old, they were presented to a French royal princess; here, Beethoven's *Appassionata.*

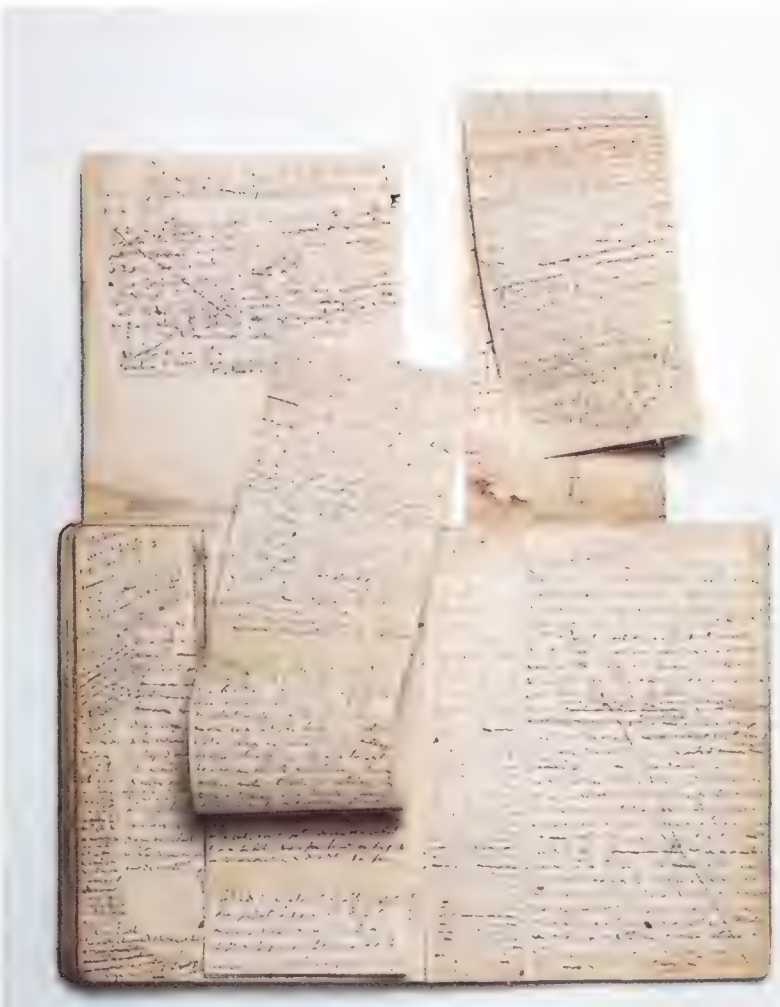
In the waiting room outside the director's office stands one of the greatest of all sculptures in the French realist tradition, Houdon's plaster model for his marble statue of Voltaire, crinkling in every fold of drapery and skin, exuding all the fun-loving malice of the old philosopher. Voltaire's heart is inside the base.

Here is a map of the world believed to have been drawn by Christopher Columbus, or at least his brother. And 29 notebooks of sketches by Degas, each image more entrancing than the last.

Here, in the section known as the Phonothèque, devoted to the recording arts, is a phonograph of the kind once offered for sale by the grocery firm of Félix Potin, which could play records made of chocolate. Unfortunately none survive—they were too good not to eat.

Here is a page torn out of the notebook on which Pascal feverishly scribbled "*Joye, Joye, Joye, Pleurs de Joye . . .*" on November 24, 1654, when he was vouchsafed a vision of the God of Abraham. He kept the page sewed into the lining of his coat till the day he died.

Here are boxes full of portraits on paper by François Clouet, as penetrating a psychological study as has ever been done of any group of people. Day after day Clouet recorded the faces of the aristocrats of the Valois court in the declining years of the 16th century, and here they are in all their fastidious elegance—carousing, intriguing, writing love poems, while the blood of the religious wars flowed in the streets outside. Cold-eyed princes; strumpets of high degree; pert young Mary Stuart in her brief moment as queen of France. And young Henri de Navarre (above), in Paris to marry the king's sister, offers an ingratiating smile, a wary look in his eye, as if he suspected that a week later, on St. Bartholomew's Day, the Protestants in Paris would be butchered like pigs and he would save his life only by abjuring his religion. Again, the same



Painting-on-silk offers glimpse of the Chinese emperor Qianlong's exquisite summer palace garden in 1744.

Proust's manuscript for *A la recherche du temps perdu* features sheets of paper pasted into unwieldy lengths.

Henri some years later, full-bearded and self-assured, now well on his way to becoming the king of France, but with the same half-smile and the same wary eyes.

Chinese scholars come to peruse every detail of a series of paintings that document the splendors of the emperor Qianlong's 18th-century Garden of Perfect Brightness. The garden, except for a few ruins, has long disappeared, but its image—a rare record of the Chinese cultural past—survives, having been looted by a Colonel Dupin when a Franco-British force stormed and destroyed the Yuanming Yuan summer palace in 1860.

That was, apparently, the last incidence of violence in the amassing of the Bibliothèque's collections. There were many looters before Colonel Dupin. Before the invention of printing, every book was a unique work of art, and besides enhancing the prestige of its owner, had a considerable cash value and was easy to carry off as plunder after a successful war.

After Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494, he appropriated choice volumes from the splendid library that Naples' Aragonese kings had spent a century building, including a cache of priceless classical manuscripts. And when Catherine de Médicis came to Paris in 1533 to marry the heir to the throne, she proved herself as greedy as she was learned. When the news came that her cousin, the nobleman Piero Strozzi, had died fighting for France at the siege of Thionville, she elbowed aside his heirs and grabbed his collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts. Strozzi's holdings included two magnificent ninth-century Byzantine copies of the complete works of Plato and Demosthenes, which count today among the Bibliothèque's supreme treasures.

The heyday for looting came during the French Revolution, when the properties of the great churches and monasteries and of the aristocrats who fled abroad were expropriated by the government. A great deal was lost or destroyed. Countless valuable objects were simply stolen. Some books were destroyed because good republicans were outraged by the armorial decorations on their bindings. Two thousand volumes were burned in one day on the Place Vendôme as remnants of the criminal ancien régime.

An enthusiastic general wanted to expand on the excesses. He proposed to burn the whole library because it, too, was "soiled with the name of Royal." The devoted librarians did their best to control the rage for destruction and to save the books that came their way. It was rough work—the wagons, loaded with medieval manuscripts, contemporary archives, pious books, erotic books, philosophical books, kept lumbering up unannounced to the gates of the Rue de Richelieu, dumping their contents in the courtyard, to be sorted, registered,

Ivory chess piece, once thought to be Charlemagne's, is now known to date from 11th-century southern Italy.

stored somehow. An illustrated Carolingian manuscript that belonged to Charlemagne's son found its way to a broom closet. It was dangerous work, too—three successive directors of the library were denounced as secret counterrevolutionaries by an envious underclerk. Two were guillotined; the third escaped that blade by slitting his own throat.

Barely had all the domestic confiscations been absorbed than new floods began to arrive. France's armies were then storming over Europe, overthrowing ancient monarchies and republics and scooping up mountains of works of art in the process. Gen. Napoléon Bonaparte was particularly efficient in this form of collection. He had a catalog made of the treasures in the Vatican and sent the pope a list with items marked on a graduated scale, *précieux, très précieux* and so on, to indicate which ones would be appropriate gifts to the conquering French Republic.

No one, at least no one on the French side, saw anything wrong with such procedures. France's armies were bringing "liberty" and "enlightenment" to lands of benighted tyranny, and it was only natural that they should reward themselves with these beautiful objects that, in addition, would be much better off, and better cared for, in Paris, rather than moldering away in dank monasteries and moth-eaten palaces.

Fortunately, the Bibliothèque collection has not always had to depend on force of arms. Gifts and bequests have come from all kinds of sources, for all kinds of motives. In 1667, the Abbé de Marolles sold his unique collection of 123,000 prints, drawings and miscellany to King Louis XIV. It contained works by celebrated artists, but unlike other connoisseurs of his time, the Abbé's standards were not primarily esthetic. He laid his hands on all kinds of commonplace material—handbills, playing cards, all the humdrum testimonials to daily life that modern historians love, and that are still collected in vast quantities by the Bibliothèque.

But there were many benefactors who have enriched the Bibliothèque with no thought of reward. The original score of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, dashed off in a flowing hand in 1787, with virtually no erasures, was the deathbed bequest of Pauline Viardot, the renowned diva and Turgenev's obsession, who had in her youth sold all her jewels to buy it. Thanks to the generosity of the mother of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, the Bibliothèque possesses a glorious set of the artist's lithographs in all their successive stages, so that we can watch him orchestrating his colors as he adds them one by one.

Along with all these gifts went the steady grinding of the *dépôt légal*, filling the shelves with books of all descriptions. In the 18th century the authors of the *Encyclopédie*, the first great collective survey of scientific and technical knowledge, got most of their material from books borrowed on the Rue de Richelieu. By the 19th, the Bibliothèque was reasonably well prepared for the great explosion of scholarship.

The routines of research were shattered at the outbreak of World War II, when the great and unwieldy collections were imperiled as never before. Director Julien Cain orchestrated an enormous rescue operation, removing precious documents for safekeeping to the South of France. (Cain himself, who was Jewish, was removed from his post, arrested by the Germans and sent to Buchenwald. He managed to survive and by 1945 was back in his office, running the Bibliothèque with legendary vigor until his retirement in 1964.)

For scholars worldwide, a rite of passage

Today, for generations of scholars in France and abroad, the delivery of the little card allowing access to the main reading room remains a rite of passage into the upper levels of the learned world. Over the years, the Bibliothèque has even become a little less exclusive, opening its doors to a wider public, as it periodically removes its fragile treasures from their dark hiding places to put them on display—and even allows some holdings to travel abroad. The past decade in particular has seen several ambitious exhibitions.

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In Touch with Tomorrow

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Pascal memorabilia includes "Tears of Joy" testament (top), and a portrait drawn by his friend Jean Domat.

First-century Roman carving of emperors and barbarian prisoners is the largest ancient cameo known to exist.

Visitors to shows like these come away with the impression that the old lady of the Rue de Richelieu is in excellent health, indeed putting on youthful airs. The computerization of the catalog is proceeding at a rapid rate. The conservation department is attacking the problem of book decay with energy and efficiency. This is the specter haunting all libraries these days—the gradual disintegration of almost all books printed since the mid-19th century, eaten alive by the acids in pulp paper, which displaced the more expensive but more durable rag paper. In the lovely old Château de Sablé-sur-Sarthe, 125 miles west of Paris, the Bibliothèque is putting as many as 50,000 books a year into chemical baths that deacidify the paper. This process should keep the books from crumbling to confetti for many decades, if not centuries, to come. With several million volumes at risk, the library obviously has a long way to go, but it has already made impressive strides.

Each year, an avalanche of books

But for all the bustle of progress, the Bibliothèque, at least as the world has known it, is about to die. For the printed word, doomed to extinction or obsolescence by so many fashionable thinkers, continues to grow at an ever-increasing rate. Seventy thousand new books a year come pouring into the library's receiving rooms, and there is no more room to hold them. The 71 miles of shelf space in the 11 stories of stacks at the southwest end of the building are crammed to capacity. There is no more room to grow on the Rue de Richelieu. The library has expanded into new buildings across the street, but this is downtown real estate, among the most expensive in the world. Already, many periodicals have been exiled to an annex in Versailles.

The librarians have been saying for years that a radical solution had to be found. One was to take all the orphan books, the ones that have been sitting on the shelves for scores of years without anyone ever asking for them, and store them in silos somewhere out of town. Scholars were quick to point out that this would be a heartless affront to the forlorn authors; besides, these unread books often come to unexpected life when someone opens them at last and finds new information or new insights.

The only alternative was to erect a new building. Of course, any structure large enough to hold millions of books, as well as all the equipment a modern library needs, was bound to be a very expensive proposition. Fortunately for the librarians, François Mitterrand was elected president of France in 1981. To cap a reign that has already seen the construction of the pyramid of the Louvre, the great Arche de la Défense, a new opera house, the science museum at La Villette (SMITHSONIAN, October 1987), a new Arab institute, and the completion

We've been coming here since we first got married. Back then, we wouldn't even bring a tent. We'd just spread out our sleeping bags, look up at the stars and plan our future until we fell asleep. That was two children ago. Then, one night last summer, our son Jimmy got out his sleeping bag, dragged it over to the clearing, curled up and fell asleep. It was a beautiful night, so we all pulled out our bags and joined him. Just spent the night under the stars together. Reminded me of old times.

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An anonymous artist produced this watercolor portrait of Louis II, Duc d'Anjou, in the 15th century. Titular king of Naples and Sicily from 1389 to 1399, the subject just happens to bear a passing resemblance to the current president of France, François Mitterrand.

of a new art museum in the Gare d'Orsay (SMITHSONIAN, March 1987), Mitterrand decreed in 1988 a new Bibliothèque de France.

As originally presented in the press, this was to be a showcase of advanced communications technology, where millions of readers could call up any work they wanted on electronic screens. When it became apparent that the transfer of millions of books to optical disk would create formidable problems, and certainly impose massive delays, those plans were postponed.

The approved model, unveiled last year, is the work of the young French architect Dominique Perrault. His design offered an unconventional storage house for books: four great glass towers at the corners of a huge rectangular structure, surrounding a sunken garden. It will occupy the last substantial parcel of open space left in Paris, some abandoned railroad tracks along the left bank of the Seine at the east end of the city.

Critics objected that books, enclosed in the spectacular towers, could not withstand such unrelenting exposure to sunlight. The architect had hoped to use a new form of light-filtering glass. But because that technology is not yet available, a likely solution would be to sheathe towers, perhaps of concrete or stone, in glass. Construction is set to begin in 1991. The opening is scheduled for 1995.

The original announcement called for the Bibliothèque de France to be a library of modernity; it would hold everything printed since 1945 and everything to be printed in the future. Everything dating from the

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dark days before 1945 would remain in the good old Bibliothèque Nationale on the Rue de Richelieu. It was a bold, simple plan, until you really thought about it. Consider, librarygoers protested, the confusion and delays, the hours of subway travel between the two supplies of books.

In the end, President Mitterrand bowed to the fray, graciously admitting that the scheme had been cockeyed. A new plan was announced: all the books, magazines and periodicals will be moved en masse from the Bibliothèque Nationale to the Bibliothèque de France. Even though that decision has been made, other uncertainties remain. No one knows the details of the new library's final form, especially the interior spaces. It will certainly look entirely different from the old building, severe and modern instead of ornate and cozy. The only point in common will be the greenery: Labrouste insisted on putting murals of sylvan scenes on his reading room walls, to remind the bookish inmates of the living world outside. In the new library, the three reading rooms envisioned by Perrault will look out on a grove of trees set in place to ornament the sunken garden.

Surely in time the stark new structure will develop its own traditions, sentimentalities, loyalties. What, meanwhile, of the old lady left behind on the Rue de Richelieu? There have been many suggestions, including one to make the old Bibliothèque into a national library of the arts. Whatever happens, lovers of the old building are sure no one will dare to tear it down. It will go on for centuries more, a treasure house luring visitors to see what remains after the books are gone—paintings, engravings, maps, gems and all those miscellaneous items: Charlemagne's chess set, a collection of Camembert labels, a tenth-century Arabian astrolabe, a phonograph that played chocolate records.

Nine cupolas, crowned by tracery-embellished glass, suffuse reaches of the main reading room with light. Architect Labrouste sheathed domes in glazed white tile to amplify effect of brightness in the soaring space.

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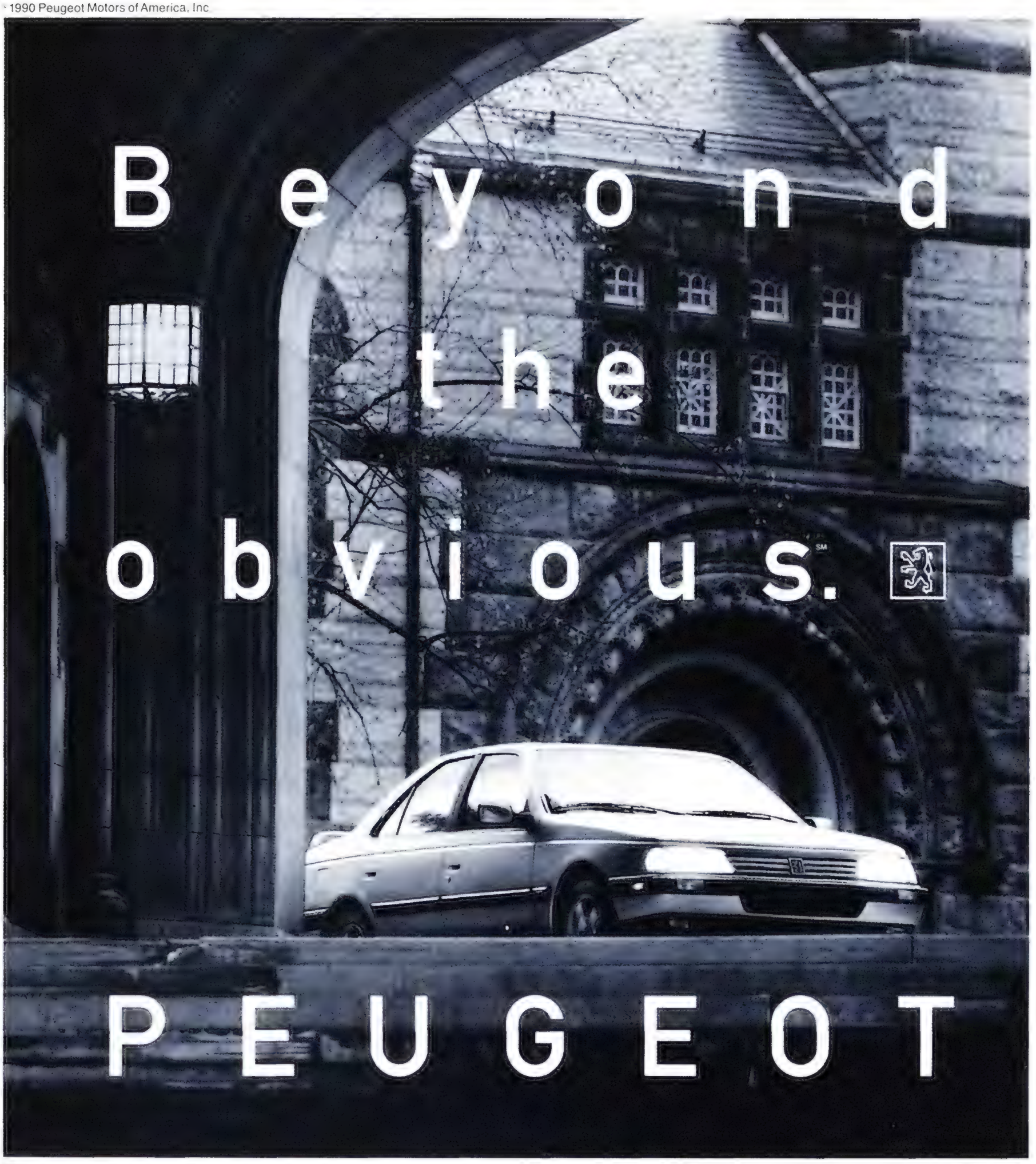

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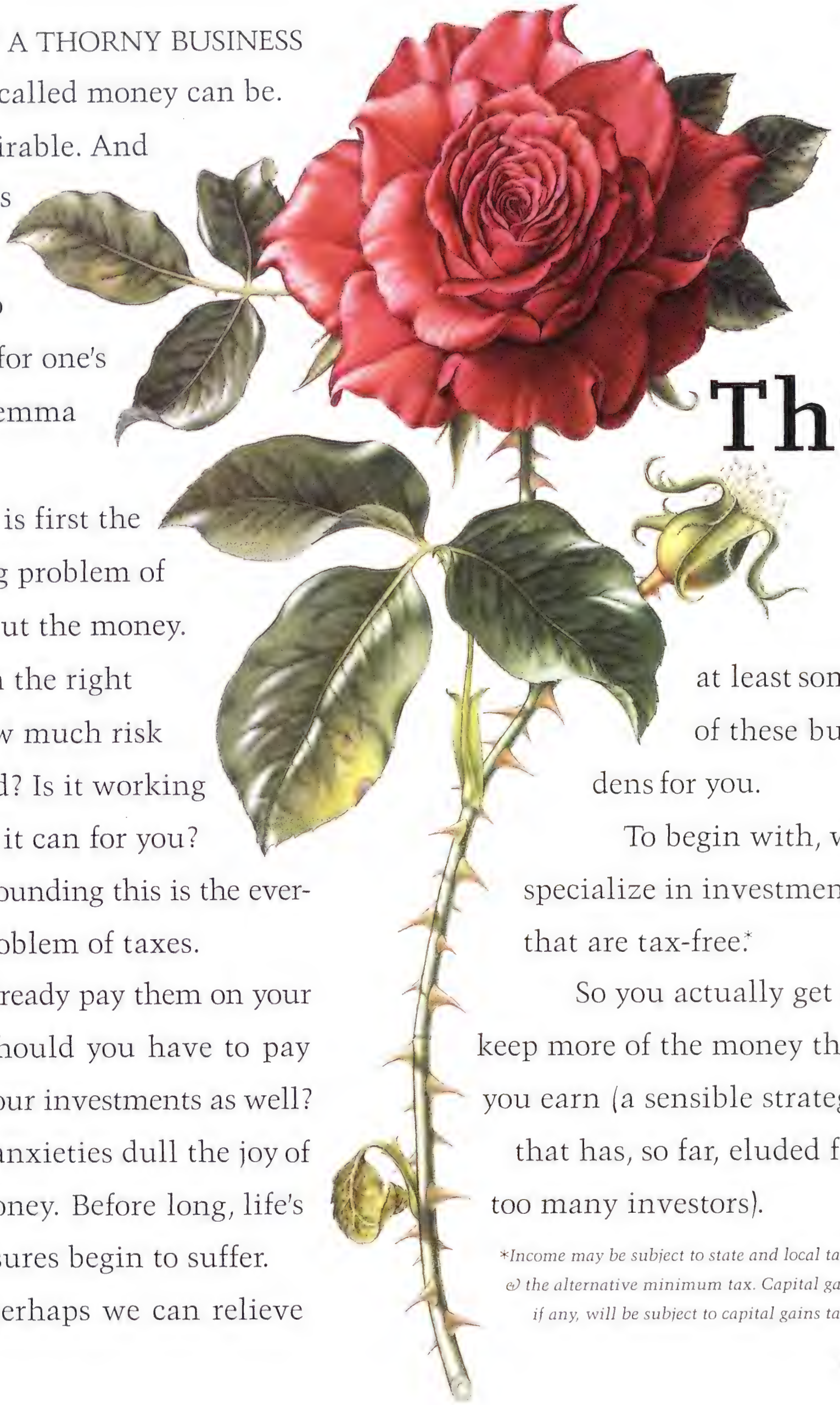

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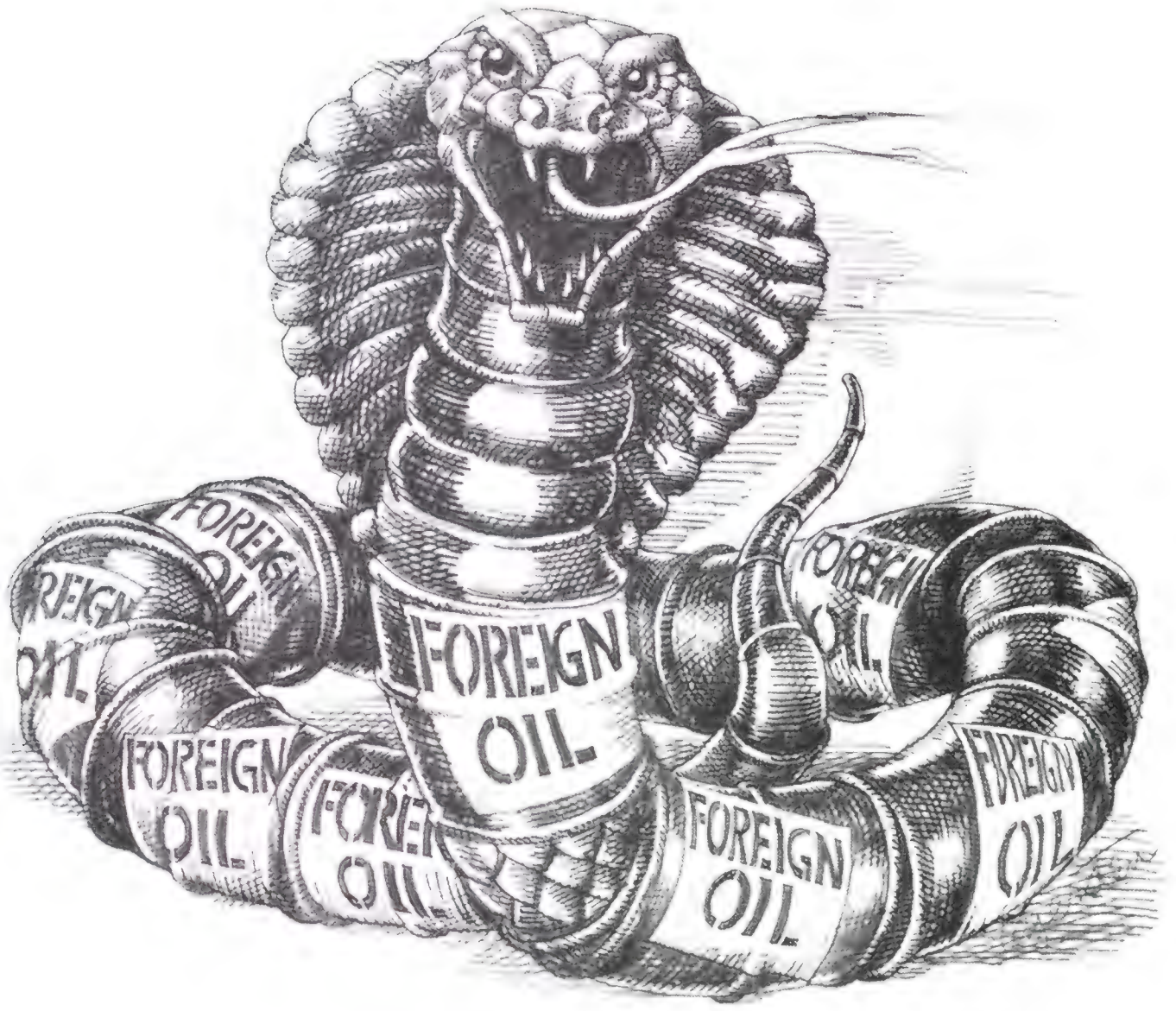

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By Damaine Vonada

Annie Oakley was more than 'a crack shot in petticoats'

As a performer, she was a self-made woman who practiced what the suffragettes preached

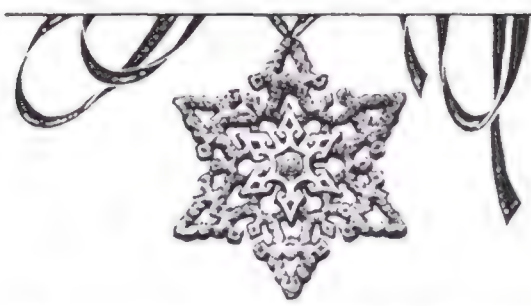
Bemedaled sharpshooter posed primly in 1892 for a picture that was reproduced on cards she used as targets in exhibitions.

Undoubtedly the photograph is an old one, for its subject appears to be the quintessence of late Victorian womanhood. She is sitting in a rocking chair, reading a book. Her skirt reaches to her shoes, and balloon sleeves conceal her arms. She has a tiny waist and an ample bosom—the corseted hourglass figure so much in vogue in America in the late 19th century. The entrance to her abode is open, and carefully arranged inside are a fashionable carpet, framed portraits and a decanter of wine awaiting her next round of guests.

The snug domestic scene pictured here might be almost anywhere in America in the 1890s, except for the guns propped against the bicycle—and they're a dead giveaway. The woman we're looking at is no ordinary middle-class matron, nor is her home a typical Queen Anne confection of bays and turrets. This is Annie Oakley, the sharpshooting headliner of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show and, because the troupe is playing on the road, she's living in a tent furnished with all the comforts a performer of her extraordinary stature commands.

That Annie Oakley is special there can be no doubt. In the pantheon of flamboyant 19th-century Americans who parlayed their talent, energy and intelligence into something approaching superstardom, she occupies a niche all her own. For at a time when a woman's place was still considered to be home sweet home, Annie achieved fame and fortune by going out into the world and beating men at their own game. As the thousands who cheered her all across the country discovered, she wielded rifles, shotguns and revolvers as easily as other women did knitting needles.

She could shoot the flames off candles as they rotated on a wheel or hit a dime held in a man's hand, leaving his fingers intact and her audience breathless. At the simultaneous release of four glass balls, she could dash 20 feet, vault over a table, pick up a gun, aim and shatter all four targets before they hit the ground. While



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many trick-shot artists used a mirror to shoot backward, Annie did them one better: she fired over her shoulder by sighting in the narrow reflection from a Bowie knife blade.

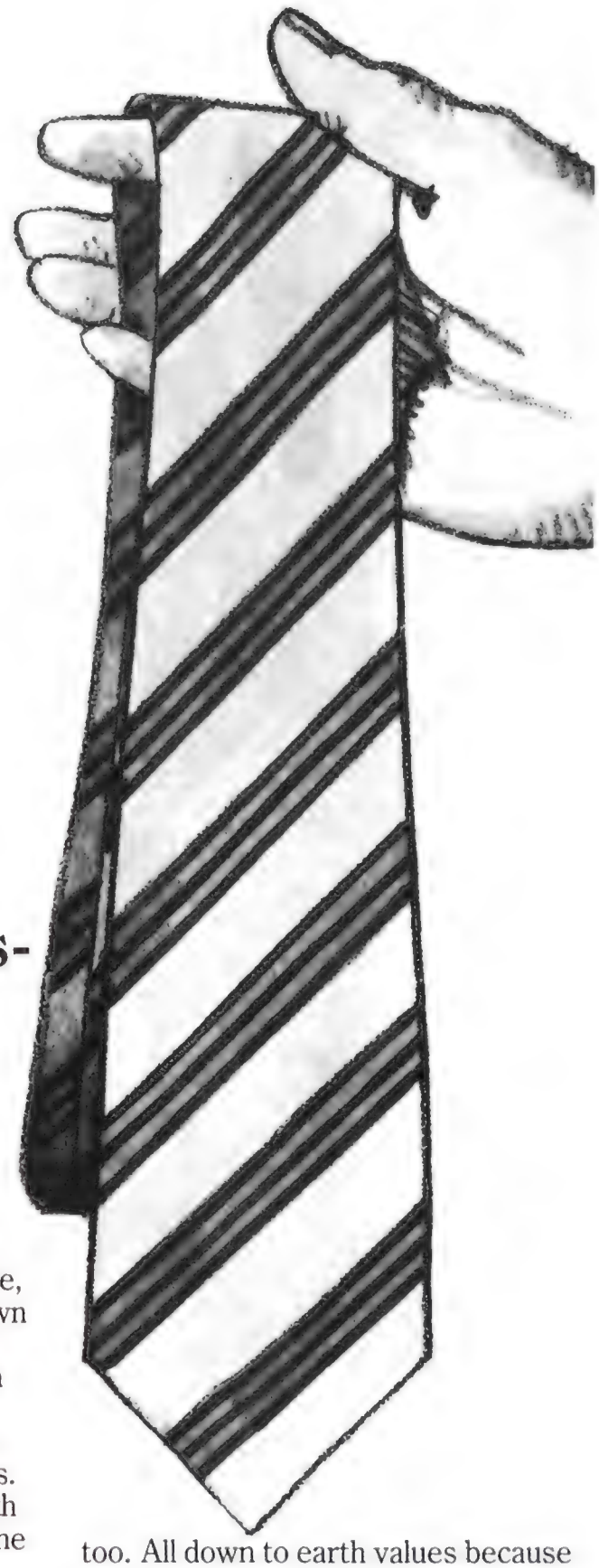
Annie was an athlete. She turned cartwheels and did handsprings; she stood on the back of a galloping horse and shot glass balls out of the air. When the nation fell in love with the bicycle, she mastered it, too, and gamely pedaled about as she discharged her weapons.

She spent the better part of her career with the Wild West show, a traveling cowboy-and-Indian entertainment that showcased her talents perfectly. After the Civil War, dime novels romanticized Col. William F. Cody's rambunctious early life as a Pony Express rider, Indian fighter and buffalo hunter, and in the 1880s he parlayed his reputation as the consummate frontiersman "Buffalo Bill" into a full-fledged pageant. By then, the West was hardly its old wild self, having been tamed by barbed wire and tethered to the East by the very railroads that Cody used to transport his cowboys.

But even as the real frontier faded into history, the Wild West extravaganza capitalized on the public's instant nostalgia for it, feeding audiences an irresistible mishmash of wagon train reenactments, Pony Express relays, thundering buffalo, lasso-twirling cowboys, stagecoach-chasing Indians, Indian-chasing cavalry. Years before the horse-opera movie became popular, Cody had it all down pat. And looming like demigods over the tumultuous proceedings were two larger-than-life figures: Buffalo Bill, the self-styled "last of the great scouts," and Annie Oakley, "the maid of the Western plains."

We know all about Bill (SMITHSONIAN, January 1983), or at least he remains such a persistent and familiar presence that we think we do. Annie is something else again. Despite the

The author, a contributing editor of Ohio *magazine, has written two books about the Buckeye State.*



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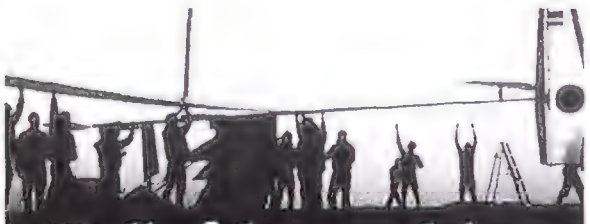

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Annie's mother, Susan Wise Moses, was a widow who had a big family to feed.

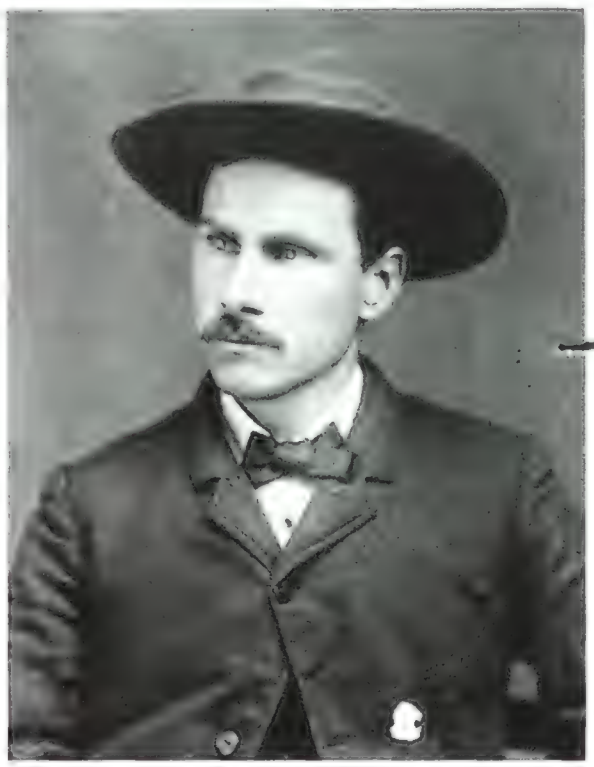
celebrity she achieved in her lifetime, and notwithstanding the fact that she has been reincarnated on Broadway, in movies and in books, she remains something of a mystery woman. What was it those excited crowds lined up to see a century ago? Or, more precisely, who was she?

These are not easy questions to answer. Annie Oakley's private life was very private, her public persona was to some extent the fanciful product of the Wild West show's promoters, and by now she has become an almost-mythical character. For nearly every story about her, there is another that contradicts it. Some things, however, are fairly certain.

To begin with, she was pretty and petite—five feet tall and under a hundred pounds. She had attractive blue eyes and, according to one male admirer, "white and perfect teeth" and a "low sweet voice full of melody." She wasn't a "maid" and she wasn't from the Western plains, either. Show business slogans aside, Annie was a married woman who never ventured beyond the Missouri River until she was in her mid-20s. The only "Western" aspect of her background was that she came from western Ohio, where she was born Phoebe Ann Moses on August 13, 1860.

Annie's family had a small farm carved out of the woods in Darke County. Twenty miles to the south lay the nearest town, Greenville, where in 1795 Mad Anthony Wayne's famous treaty with the Indians had opened the United States' first Western frontier to white settlement. When Annie was 5, her father died, leaving her mother with a brood of hungry children and a 40-inch Kentucky rifle. Annie learned to shoot the muzzle-loader and began hunting. Her precociousness put meat on the table.

Apparently Annie's talent was inborn and she seems to have nurtured it into excellence mainly on her own. (Her mother, a Quaker, thought Annie's prowess was "tomboyish.") She was around 8 years old when she downed her first live target—either a squirrel or a rabbit, depending on which account you choose to believe. Her brother helped her load the gun, she recalled, "and I know we stuffed in enough powder to kill off a buffalo." When she took aim and fired, the weapon responded with a tremendous kick. "I got the rabbit but my nose was broken," she said.



Marksman Frank Butler married Annie a year after she beat him in a match.

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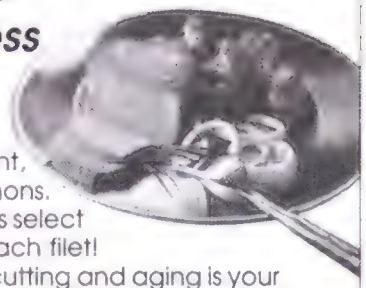

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Poster showing Annie in action featured a silver cup presented after a performance in Greenville, Ohio, not far from her hometown.

Annie had so little schooling that she probably never read the popular poor-boy-makes-good stories that Horatio Alger began publishing during her childhood. If she had, she would have identified immediately with the heroes. When it came to adversity, Ragged Dick and Tattered Tom had nothing on Phoebe Ann Moses. As her family slipped deeper and deeper into poverty, she was placed in the home of a local farmer who promised to give her an education. Instead, he cruelly abused her. Her memories of the hard work and beatings were so painful that for the rest of her life she refused to say the names of the farmer and his wife, instead referring to them as "he-wolf" and "she-wolf."

Annie was reunited with her family after her mother remarried, but a carpenter's lien on her stepfather's house threatened their new life to-

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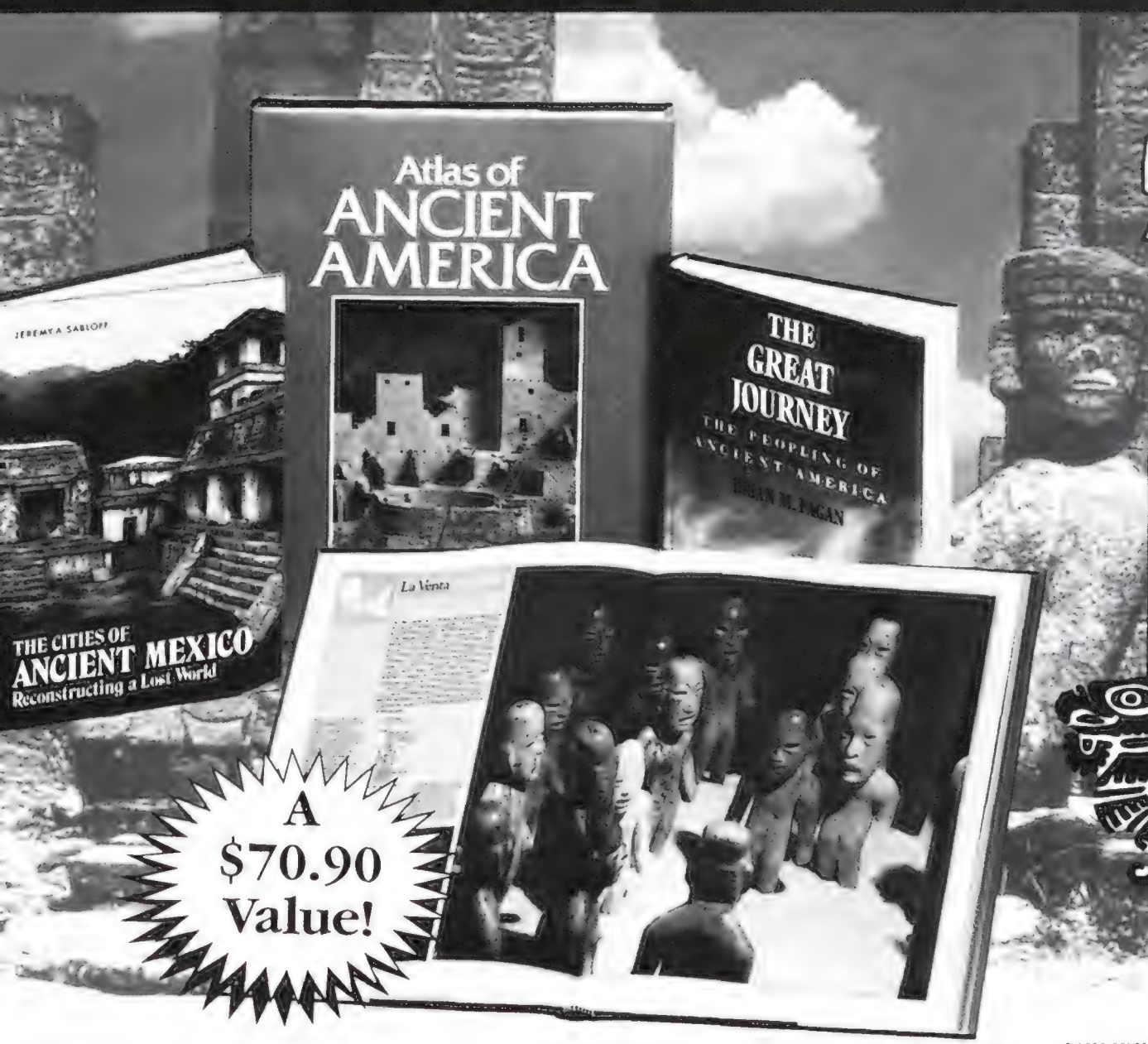

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gether. Once again, Annie picked up her muzzle-loader and took to the woods. This time she hunted commercially, supplying quail and pheasant to hotel dining rooms a hundred miles away in Cincinnati. Her aim was so good that she consistently shot her quarry in the head. The hotels paid a premium for meat that was not riddled with buckshot, and by her early teens, Annie had earned enough money to pay off the lien.

Today it's difficult to appreciate how highly regarded sharpshooting was a century ago. In many parts of the country, marksmanship was still essential to survival. In Tennessee, for example, a prospective groom often had to go hunting with his fiancée's father, for no man would let his daughter marry a fellow who could not shoot well enough to feed her.

After the Civil War, shooting became a popular form of entertainment. Gun clubs sponsored contests, and wagering on matches was common practice. Exceptional marksmen could earn a living by collecting prize money and giving exhibitions of

Buffalo Bill gave Annie her big break and she stayed with him for 17 seasons.

"fancy" shooting. In 1875, one such professional, a man named Frank Butler, arrived in Cincinnati for an engagement. A hotelier who purchased Annie's game arranged a trapshooting contest between the two of them.

At 25, Butler was already a man of the world, married once, well traveled and a celebrated exhibition shooter credited with inventing several stunts. "I almost dropped dead when a little slim girl in short dresses stepped out to the mark with me," he would later remember. "I never shot better in my life, but never did a person make more impossible shots than that little girl." Their thrilling match, which Butler lost on the last shot, was the talk of Cincinnati for many months. Afterward, Butler would say that it was one of the few times he had ever been beaten and certainly the first time by a woman.

A year later, Phoebe Ann Moses became Mrs. Frank Butler. A "sentimental Irishman," according to one biographer, Butler had immigrated to the United States when he was a youngster, had worked as a stable boy and at an assortment of other odd jobs, then got into show business with a group of trained dogs before developing a shooting act. It wasn't long before his wife became his partner onstage as well as off, and Butler became sort of an all-purpose mentor. He taught her reading and writing in addition to stagecraft and stunts. She adopted a new name (she never had liked her surname) and doggedly practiced the tricks Butler taught her.

In their famous ace-of-hearts routine, Butler held the playing cards while Annie neatly shot the hearts out of the centers. Over the years, that stunt became the crowd pleaser that made "Annie Oakley" a synonym for a free ticket, which in those days was identified by punched holes. According to one apocryphal story, the slang

In 1885 woodcut, Annie was portrayed in an outfit she probably never wore.

expression appeared after baseball czar Ban Johnson eyed a riddled ticket and quipped, "Looks like Annie Oakley'd been shooting at it."

By the time the shooting team of Butler and Oakley signed up with Buffalo Bill in 1885, Annie's apprenticeship was over. She had developed into a "consummate actress," accord-

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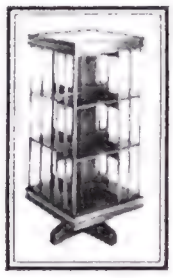

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Sitting Bull, who toured with Wild West show, called Annie "Little Sure Shot."

ing to the Wild West show's press agent, Dexter Fellows, with a "personality that made itself felt as soon as she entered the arena." She received star billing in the show, while Butler took a supporting role as her coach and manager. He loaded and cleaned her guns, tossed out targets and stood on the sidelines while the woman he called his "little girl" curtsied to the crowds. When the troupe went to London, the servants of an English lord mistook Frank's last name as his occupation and assumed he was Annie's butler.

In the long and colorful history of show-business promotion, it is unlikely that any publicity operatives were ever more effective than those who accompanied Buffalo Bill and his gang on the road. As they traveled from town to town and city to city, Dexter Fellows and his boss, "Arizona John" Burke, Cody's sidekick and chief pitchman, fed the popular press a steady diet of ballyhoo, and readers lapped up every bit of it—especially news about Annie Oakley. Folks from Knoxville to New York learned how she hobnobbed with royalty when the

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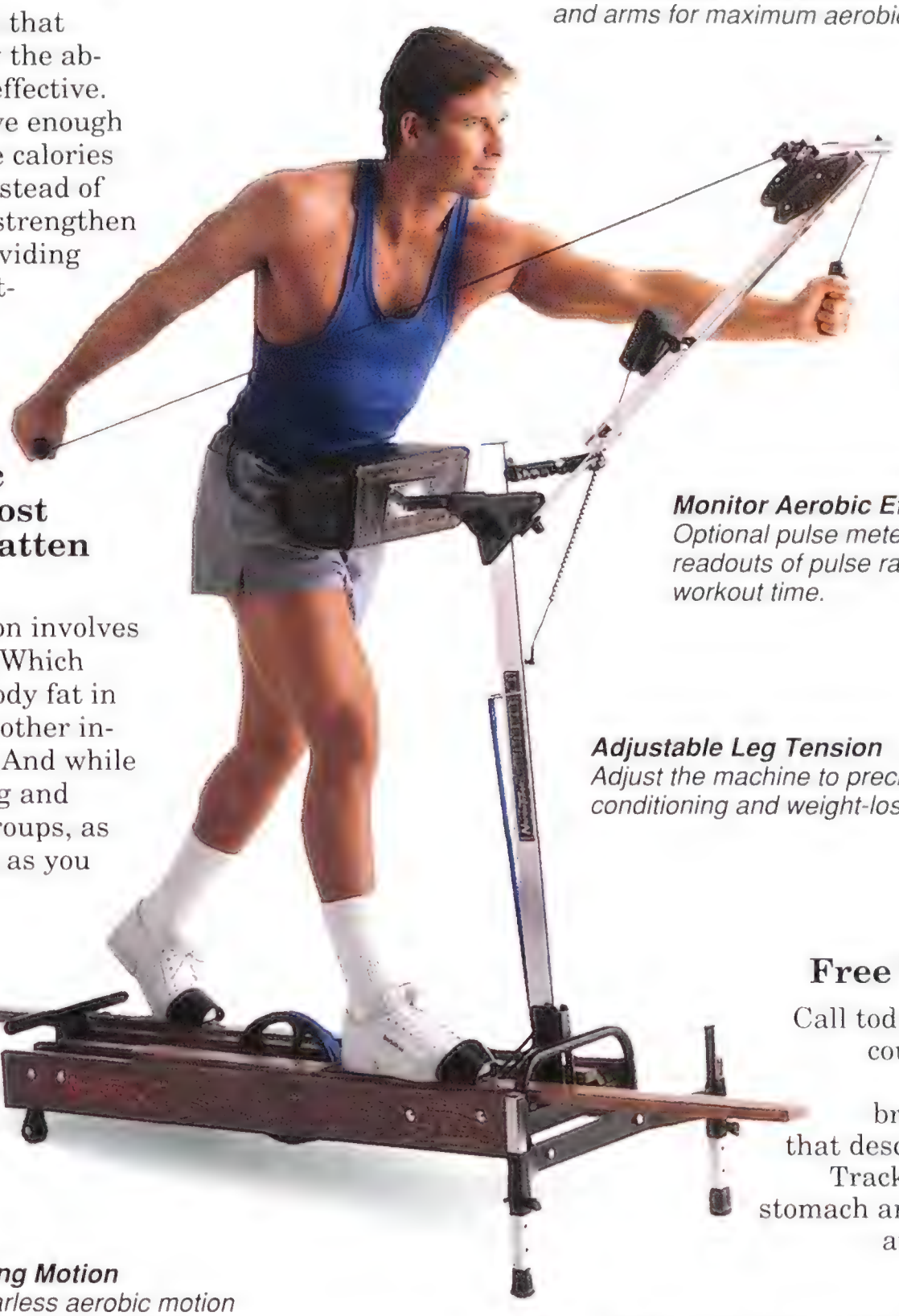

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Wild West spectacle toured Europe—staging a charity show for the Baroness de Rothschild and giving a command performance for Queen Victoria, who declared that Annie was a "very, very clever little girl." People read about how Annie smuggled gunpowder into France by hiding it in her bustle, and how, on a snowy day in New York, she borrowed one of the show's moose to go for a sleigh ride down Fifth Avenue. They read about Annie and Sitting Bull, the great Sioux leader, who toured briefly with the troupe and became so fond of Annie that he made her his adopted daughter and called her Watanya Cicilia, "Little Sure Shot."

Buffalo Bill and Annie were among the nation's first modern media darlings, but their rise to prominence was not due entirely to flackery. Cody was a brilliant showman whose authentic feeling for the Old West was augmented by an uncanny instinct for knowing how to keep an audience on its feet. Annie, according to one Cody biographer, was the "artistic mainstay of the show" and its number one drawing card. Her 17 seasons with the outfit were the best of times for Cody, the heyday when he netted up to

Wearing a dark dress and hat instead of costume, Annie gave a lesson in 1920s.

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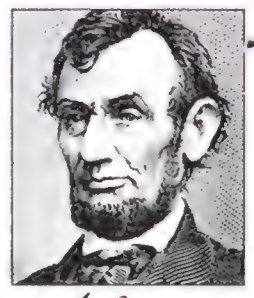

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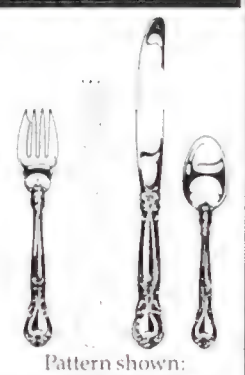

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$1 million a year and she commanded the show's highest salary, reportedly as much as $1,000 per week, which was slightly more than the President of the United States was making.

Her exploits with the Wild West show made "Annie Oakley" a household name; not so well known was the fact that Annie also maintained a second career as a professional competition shooter whose record in tournaments and trapshoots left no doubt that her ability was genuine. She once pocketed $9,000 from just one series of matches in England; during her lifetime she amassed more than $100,000 in prizes.

Exhibition shooters like Frank Butler, Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley demonstrated far more than exceptional eye-hand coordination. They also had a knack for dramatizing the difficulty of their tricks. Annie's most famous shot was probably made in Charlottenburg, a suburb of Berlin, when she gave an exhibition for the German royal family. Crown Prince Wilhelm was so impressed with Annie's skill that he insisted on participating in a stunt. He lit a cigarette, put it in a holder, then clenched the holder in his teeth. Stepping back 30 paces, Annie shot away the cigarette. Years later, after Wilhelm became kaiser and helped foment World War I, Annie remarked, "If my aim had been poorer, I might have averted the Great War."

According to John Satterwhite, a modern exhibition shooter who lives in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, hitting that cigarette had to be a relatively easy trick for Annie. "It was spectacular because of the element of danger," he says, "but it was simple because there was no moving target. Any exhibition shooter has standard shots that will always draw applause. The crowd pleasers, however, aren't necessarily the most difficult."

One of only a handful of Americans who still practice exhibition shooting, Satterwhite is also a serious competitive marksman. He was the captain of the U.S. Olympic shooting team in 1976 and has won several gold medals in international events. Satterwhite rates Annie as an expert. Even her skill in the show ring was of such superior caliber that he is careful to describe her act not as trick shooting but as precision shooting.

Annie was not the best shot the nation ever produced; she was simply the best at capturing the public's imagination. Certainly many men could rival her with a rifle, Ad Topperwein, for one, not to mention such women as Mrs. Ad Topperwein, otherwise known as Plinky. Ad and Plinky were famous shooters who traveled around the country competing in matches and promoting Winchester arms products. Plinky, the first woman trapshooter to break 100 clay pigeons

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in succession, was arguably a better shot than Annie. But she remained in the entertainment backwater of state fairs, demonstrating commercial products, while Annie starred in the sharpshooters' equivalent of Carnegie Hall.

By all accounts, Annie was easy to get along with. She trekked across two continents and sailed an ocean in mostly male company. Her co-workers treated her with sisterly regard and affection. The only grouser seems to have been Dexter Fellows, who was annoyed by what he considered Annie's miserly ways. "I played penny ante with her in Hot Springs," he grumbled. "She lost something like eighty cents. For weeks she complained about her 'heavy loss,' and I could never coax her into a game again."

Annie's reluctance may have had something to do with the fact that she was a perfectionist, as well as a pinchpenny. She wanted to do things her way, and getting beaten at cards didn't jibe with that. When she and Butler built a home in Nutley, New Jersey, she eschewed closets because she preferred living out of a trunk. Her pickiness spelled trouble when it came to keeping household help; Butler said she once had seven cooks in five days. On her deathbed, Annie orchestrated her own funeral. She also chose a gown and had it shortened to exactly the right length.

A correct hemline would hardly have mattered in heaven, but it did matter to Annie Oakley. From her fancy parasol to her high button shoes, Mrs. Frank Butler endeavored to present herself as a model of propriety. Her favorite book, she said, was the Bible; her favorite pastime, embroidery; her favorite charity, destitute children. Annie had many admirers (one of them was the king of Senegal, who tried to buy her from Buffalo Bill for 100,000 francs when the Wild West show toured Paris) but her 50-year marriage to Butler was untouched by scandal. Annie herself told an interviewer, "To be considered a lady has always been my highest ambition."

A more pious expression of conventional Victorian virtue would be difficult to find, and yet one key to Annie's enduring appeal, an impor-

While her trusting dog, Dave, sat on a stand, an aging Annie aimed at apple.

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Picture was probably taken at hotel in North Carolina where she gave lessons.

tant factor in the aura of mystery that surrounds her still, is the gap between her decorous private life and her sensational public persona. If Annie tried hard to be good, she also appeared, however unintentionally, to be at least a little bit naughty.

Consider. At a time when the sight of a well-turned ankle was regarded as risqué, Annie's show costumes had knee-length skirts and jaunty fringes that showed off every movement. On her proud mane of chestnut-colored hair, she sported a big hat with a silver star. Respectable women were never seen in public with their hair down in those days, yet Annie Oakley always performed with her long tresses flowing freely across her shoulders.

No wonder many in her audiences regarded Annie with a bemused mixture of fascination and awe. Here was a wholesome little character presenting herself as the essence of femininity while brandishing a potent symbol of manhood, yet leading a married life as prim and circumspect as that of any middle-class housewife. She was provocative, appealing and reassuring, all at once. It wasn't clear then that Annie was not just a show business phenomenon; she was a transitional figure in rapidly changing times.

The word "liberated" had not yet come into common usage, but in a professional sense, at least, Annie was a liberated woman in a notably repressive age. Her costumes might have conjured up visions of the country's past, but her spunky independence and her amazing accomplishments in the arena presaged a future in which women would emerge from the cultural cocoon that had wrapped them in narrow notions of roles and respectability, imprisoned them in absurd clothes, and kept their hair up and their options down. Not far from Annie's tent in Chicago, when the Wild West show was playing at the World's Columbian Exposition, was the Women's Building, a focal point for the vanguard of the women's movement being led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The opening address there advocated women's "right of self-development" and desire "to play an active and useful role in the world." Every day in the show

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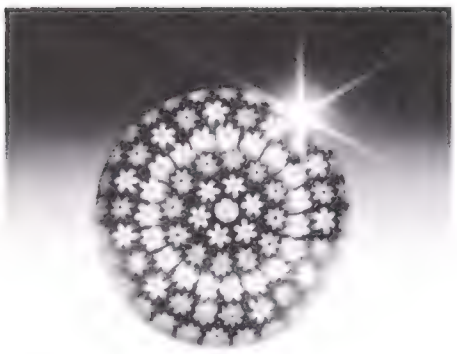

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ring, Annie was already practicing what the suffragettes were preaching.

Late in the Wild West show's 1901 season, a train carrying the troupe crashed in central North Carolina, and Annie was severely injured. Her left side was paralyzed and soon afterward her hair turned white. Nevertheless, she did recover sufficiently to star in a play and participate in matches and exhibitions. Around 1912 she hit the road one final time in a touring show called "The Young Buffalo Wild West." At about that time, the Butlers bought a house in Cambridge, Maryland, and quietly enjoyed their wildlife haven along the shores of Chesapeake Bay. Then, in 1915, Annie went to work at an elite resort in Pinehurst, North Carolina, where she taught society women to shoot and settled into a genteel life of horses, hounds and hunting.

Annie's last hurrah came during World War I. After the War Department declined her services as a shooting instructor, she volunteered to entertain the troops. Half a million soldiers—a whole new generation—got to see the legendary lady from the Wild West show. Annie played William Tell with her beloved dog, Dave;

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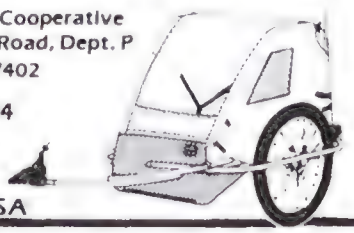

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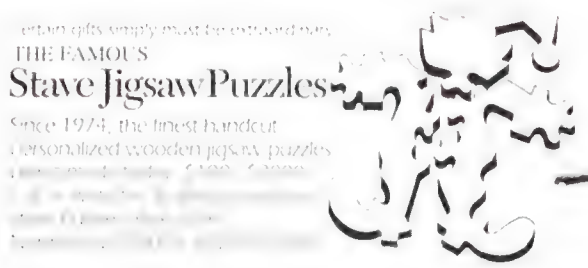

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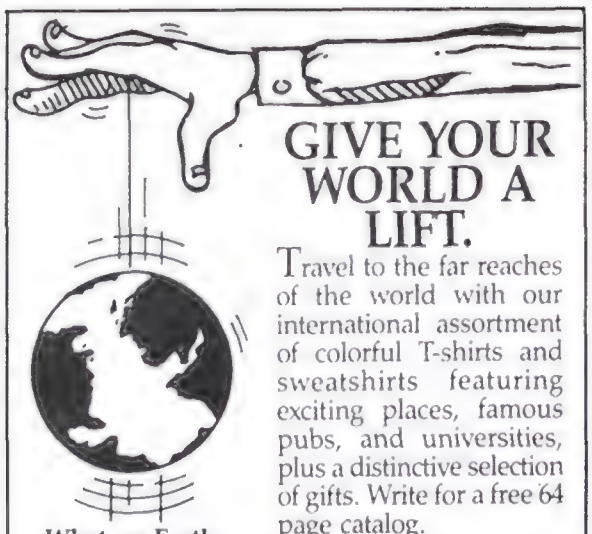

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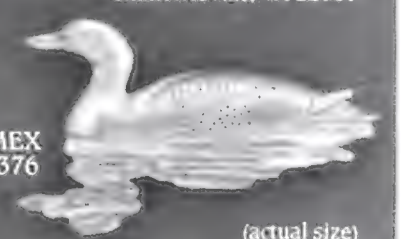

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the setter sat still while she shot an apple off his head. She might have been white-haired and wizened, but she could still shoot. She marked the occasion of her 62d birthday by hitting 100 clay pigeons one after another at Pinehurst.

In the autumn of 1922 she broke her hip in an automobile accident. The injury and time took their toll; four years later Annie went home to Ohio to die. She stayed for a while in Dayton, where humorist Will Rogers came to visit and found his old friend sitting up in bed. The next week, the Oklahoma cowboy reminisced about her in his newspaper column, asking people to write to the invalid who had once been "the reigning sensation of America and Europe."

By then, Annie surely must have felt obsolete. In 1894, she had been featured in one of the first Western movies, acting out her routines for Thomas A. Edison's kinetograph. Now screen stars like Lillian Gish and Gloria Swanson were all the rage, and no one wanted a star-spangled Western girl. Annie had her shooting medals melted down, sold the gold and donated the money to charity.

She died in Greenville on November 3, 1926 (of pernicious anemia, according to newspaper reports). As she had instructed, her body was cremated and the ashes were put into a silver loving cup that had been given to her in France. Frank Butler, who had been ill for some time, died several weeks later. Annie's ashes and his casket were interred on Thanksgiving Day in a country cemetery not far from Annie's birthplace. She had chosen their epitaph: AT REST.

As it turned out, Annie was not exactly at rest. She could never have anticipated that Broadway producers Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein would collaborate with composer Irving Berlin to create a musical, *Annie Get Your Gun*, that would make her more famous than ever before. But do not confuse Annie with brassy Ethel Merman, who portrayed her on Broadway, or bubbly Betty Hutton, who played her in the movies. There was only one Annie Oakley. She was an original—"a crack shot in petticoats," as Annie herself once put it—who, whether she knew it or not, helped make it possible for other women to break out of the stereotypes that had confined them for so long.

Annie looked matronly but as lovely as ever when she sat for this moving portrait with Dave and her devoted Frank.

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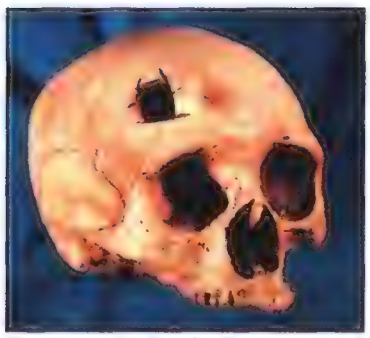

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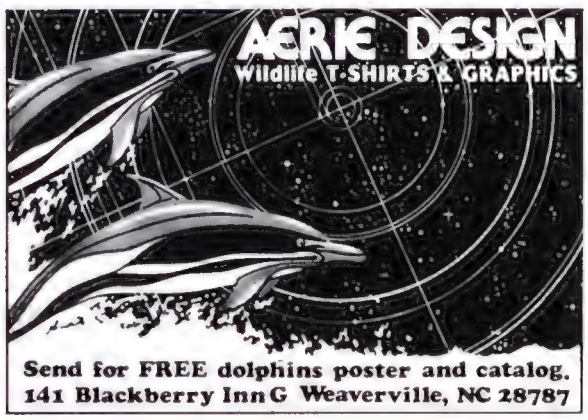

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Book reviews

Fish Decks: Seafarers of the North Atlantic
William McCloskey
Paragon House, $22.95

Greater love than this no man hath for an avocation. By his own admission, William McCloskey enjoys little more immunity from seasickness than do most landlubbers. Yet he's gone deep-sea fishing again and again, inveigling his way onto boats where the press of work requires him to drop his notepad and pitch in.

Which seems to be fine with him: the fellow is mad about fishing—its gear, its traditions, its lingo, its raw chanciness, and above all its toiling practitioners. His self-styled ambition in putting his equilibrium to so many tests may have been to "report on those representative fisheries along the great continental shelves of northern Atlantic waters which it has been my good fortune to observe," but his achievement has been to write a paean for a way of life.

A retired scientist living in Baltimore, McCloskey has all but overlooked the next-door fisheries on Chesapeake Bay to embark upon the ocean. Off the New England coast he watched herring tumble from a whopping net onto the deck, where shiny scales "flew everywhere like sawdust from a rotating blade." On the high seas he peered into the depths of an iceberg and marveled at its "interior flash of a precious stone." In Norway he eyed the whirlpools that inspired Edgar Allen Poe's story "A Descent into the Maelstrom," noting that "actually boats make it through them routinely, with care, at high tide."

But it is the fisheries, scenery and people of Newfoundland, which in-

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cludes Labrador, that engage McCloskey most insistently. In the course of several visits to the Canadian island-province and its peninsular extension on the mainland, he has immersed himself in the region's peculiar speech, daunting weather and severe beauty. Those who travel northwest by boat from island to peninsula are said to be going "down to the Labrador" because normally it is a downwind sail. En route they may don Newfoundland oilskins against the elements—the original oilskin was coarse cloth treated with multiple doses of linseed oil. Sighting land, they may share McCloskey's reaction: "It is difficult to stop describing rock when writing about the Labrador coast. Rock absolutely dominates any space not covered by water."

Like other fishermen whom McCloskey celebrates, Newfoundlanders are relieved by the mechanization of certain formerly exhausting chores and threatened by their own collective tendency to overfish the resources—but vexed by government regulations aimed at preventing them from doing so.

McCloskey is steeped enough in his material to take on one regulation, the ban on hunting baby seals (SMITHSONIAN, November 1979) that was pushed through by animal rights advocates—and make a good case for lifting it. In essence, he contends that, unhunted, seals are now so numerous that their feeding habits are depleting fisheries on which human populations depend and that, regardless of appearances, clubbing the cherubic creatures is the most humane method of killing them.

I part company with him, however, when he veers off course to side with the Louisiana shrimpers who balk at using nets that exclude sea turtles from their catch (SMITHSONIAN, December 1989). Cumbersome though the nets may be, the turtles in question are endangered species whose capacity to adapt is far below that of the humans who have been killing them inadvertently.

Even when he is arguably off base, however, McCloskey impresses the reader with his love for the fishing trade and with the rapport he invariably manages to strike with the legendarily taciturn men—and lately, women—who ply it. *Fish Decks* is a tour de force: a warm and invigorating book about a cold and clammy topic.

Dennis Drabelle
Washington author

Rebels on Eighth Street:
Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art
Avis Berman
Atheneum, $29.95

At last! A full-length, full-dress, full-fledged biography of the most important of that handful of American women who did so much in the first half of this century to bring American contemporary art into American consciousness.

Force in name and force in her chosen field, Juliana shaped the eleemosynary cultural interests of the extremely rich Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, moving step-by-step from a kind of artists' free lunch and bar in a Whitney property on Eighth Street in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, to prodigal purchases of the artists' work, to opening the house as something new under the sun, a museum of American art. The museum evolved naturally and more or less simultaneously in Juliana's mind with the steady growth of the collection and its ancillary activities.

The real origin of the Whitney Museum, Berman makes clear without quite spelling it out, is in the separate, then joined, efforts of two American women to reinvent themselves.

Gertrude Vanderbilt was born to the

Juliana Force had a simple formula: "If you like a painting, buy it."

THE

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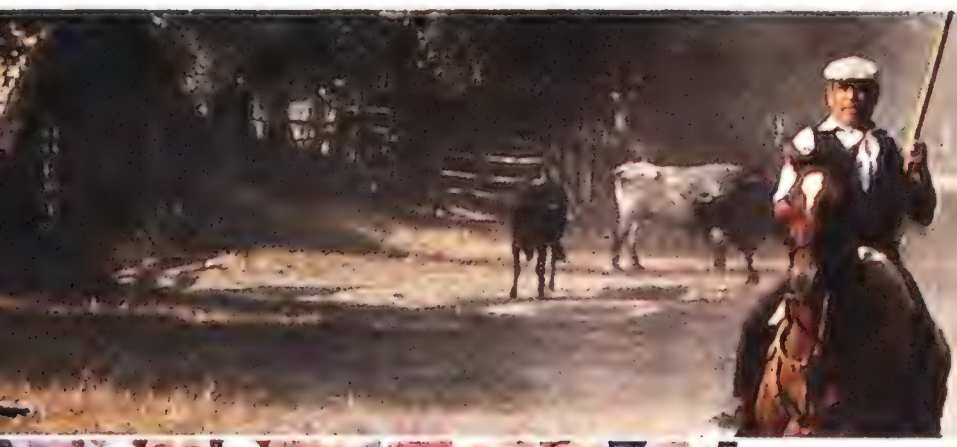

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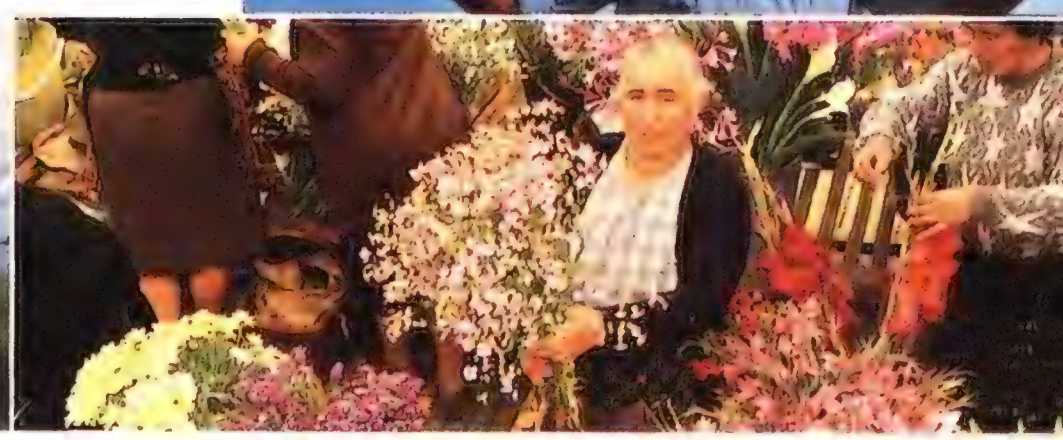

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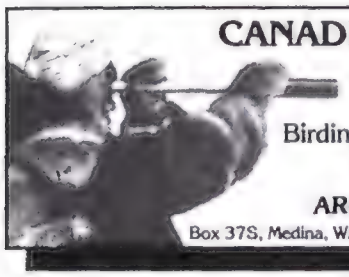
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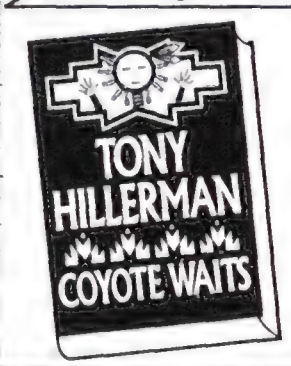

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hopelessly stuffy New York society of the Gilded Age and wanted to re-create herself as a sculptor. Juliana Force was born and grew up on the thin edge of poverty in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. She wanted to and did re-create herself as something a little higher socially, a lot higher intellectually. She ultimately came to the very top of her profession—which she also invented for her time—an American museum person devoted to American art.

The two women met in the spring of 1907 and Juliana was soon acting as social secretary and administrator of Gertrude's ambitious art projects, as well as artist's agent in getting Gertrude sculptural commissions. One thing led to another and the rest is art history—at least it is now, thanks to Avis Berman. Until now, it was some history, a lot of gossip and hearsay, and a good deal of the Orwellian memory hole, down which Juliana Force has tended to disappear, in part due to the selective memories of assorted Whitney heirs.

Berman's scholarship is formidable. She interviewed just about everyone who had personal recollections of the principals and has read everything—especially, it seems, all the relevant sections, and there are many, of the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art—and brought it all together into a fascinating story.

It is gratifying to find that incidents one has always believed to be true—primarily because if they weren't true, they should have been—really are true.

George Luks really did follow Gertrude around all evening at one of those early bashes and, when she asked him why, really did say, "Because you're so goddamn rich!"

Juliana really did fend off the simultaneous efforts of two of the greatest museum directors of her time—Francis Henry Taylor of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Fiske Kimball of the Philadelphia Museum of Art— to fold the Whitney Museum into their own so-much-more-stable, well-founded and well-funded institutions.

In an odd way, Juliana was even responsible for this book. When she realized she was dying, she resigned from her long and fruitful post at the American Federation of Arts (AFA) and asked Eloise Spaeth to "step in for her." Spaeth did step in, and later moved from the AFA to the new Archives of American Art, which she transformed

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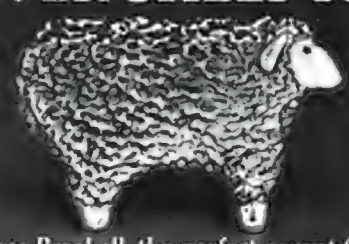
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from a local effort in Detroit into a national organization. Spaeth, now chairman emeritus, remains the focus for rallying private support for the Archives. The Archives, as Berman gratefully acknowledges, became the principal source for this superb testament to one of the brightest stars in American art history.

Frank Getlein
Author and art critic

In the Wake of the Exxon Valdez
Art Davidson
Sierra Club Books, $19.95

This book reads like the screenplay of a science fiction horror movie: a monstrous slick of blackness, engulfing birds and otters and seals before spewing them out as sticky, fluttering, moribund globs, rushes incessantly toward the innocents of Alaska, ready to lash the pristine coast with deadly and indelible filth. A host of tiny people scratch and prick at the monster, yet retreat steadily from the maw of its rage. But, unlike many screenplays, this story has no happy ending, no hero to slay the dragon. The slick is never controlled, and America is left with its worst environmental disaster.

In a swift, unadorned and remarkably evenhanded manner, Art Davidson, an Alaskan nature writer, tells the story of the grounding of the tanker *Exxon Valdez* in Prince William Sound in 1989, the spill of more than ten million gallons of oil into the waters, the frantic and futile efforts to clear the spill, and the terrible havoc visited upon the fragile environment of Alaska.

Davidson finds a good deal of guilt everywhere. Alyeska—a consortium of six oil companies including Exxon—had promised Congress and Alaskan officials that it had a contingency plan to deal with any massive oil spill. But its plan, far from adequate at the beginning, grew even skimpier with time and budget tightening. Alaskan officials had looked the other way, too content with the riches from North Slope oil to fret about the peccadilloes of the Alyeska oil companies. To compound the problem, a budget-conscious Coast Guard was relying on an out-of-date radar system incapable of warning the *Exxon Valdez* that it was heading into disaster.

Davidson does not spare the environmentalists. Exxon, which quickly took charge of the spill for Alyeska, pleaded for permission to try to burn up the slick and drop dispersants into it. Davidson believes that this operation—though only a partial solution—could have been carried out in open waters without damaging the environment. But environmentalists insisted that Exxon skim up all the oil and cart it away—an insuperable task. By the time state officials agreed to the burning and the dropping of chemical dispersants, a storm had lashed the oil into a frothy, uncontrollable sludge hurtling at the rocky coastline. It was too late to stop the onslaught.

There was then little left to do but try to clean the beaches and rocks of oil, and salvage a few otters and eagles and other creatures by painstakingly removing oil from fur and feathers. The Coast Guard did have the legal right to step in and manage the operation when it became clear that the industry was faltering in its cleanup. But the Coast Guard did not have the resources to do the job

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For many, oil-coated otter symbolizes devastation wrought by *Valdez* spill.

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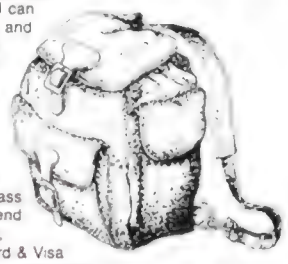

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quickly, and the Bush Administration did not want government to interfere with the work of private industry.

Although Davidson does praise the goodwill and energy of Exxon once it took charge and tried to prevent a public relations disaster in the wake of environmental disaster, he holds it and the rest of the oil industry accountable for ignoring signals that could have prevented the spill. The drinking problems of Captain Joseph Hazelwood should have caught the attention of Exxon officials; his driver's license "had been suspended for drunk driving violations three times since 1984." Moreover, Exxon had been sued by an employee who claimed that Hazelwood had been abusive "while drinking aboard ship." Still, the "inescapable fact remains that the chain of command traces up to the company's policy- and decision-makers," writes Davidson. "In both practical and moral terms, Exxon is responsible for the grounding of its tanker."

Yet, Davidson also believes that Exxon devoted more energy and resources to cleaning up the spill and meeting the claims of injured Alaskans than some other company is likely to do in the future. Davidson's conclusions are sobering. The oil companies, with the connivance of politicians, have misled the public for many years. The truth is that "*no amount of money spent or personnel deployed can control a large oil spill.*" Davidson insists that the technology simply does not exist "to deal with spilled oil on the open sea and thereby prevent it from fouling beaches and damaging wildlife and coastal resources." The lesson learned from the *Exxon Valdez* is that the next massive oil spill may unleash even greater environmental disaster.

Stanley Meisler
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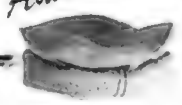

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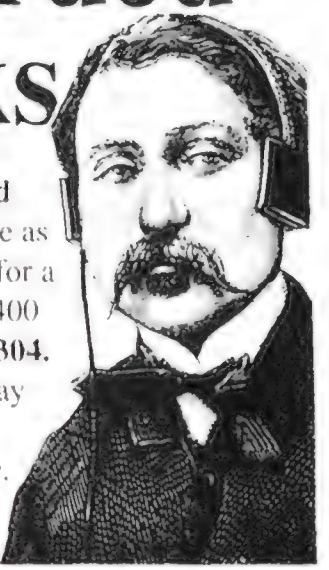

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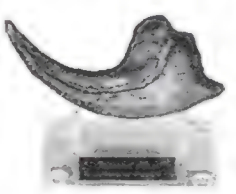

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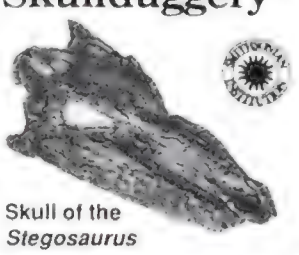

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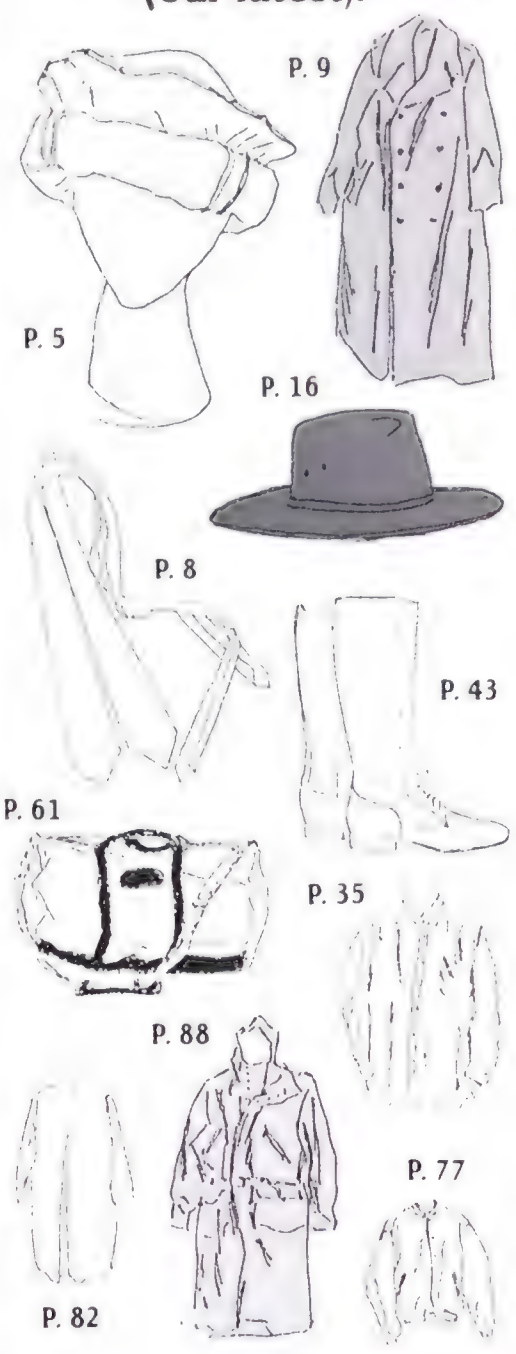

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Smithsonian highlights

Planning a Smithsonian visit?

The Associates' Planning Packet is yours for the asking. Send a postcard to Associates' Reception Center, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560, or call (202) 357-2700. For hearing-impaired visitors, use TDD and call (202) 357-1729. Begin your visit at the Associates' Reception Desk, located in the Smithsonian Castle.

Castle reopens, Freer remains closed

The Castle has reopened with a new Smithsonian Information Center and Associates' Lounge. Hours are 9 A.M.-5:30 P.M. daily. The Freer Gallery of Art is closed until 1992.

Resident Associate Anniversary

The Smithsonian Resident Associate Program celebrates its 25th anniversary this month. To commemorate this occasion, the internationally renowned American artist Jacob Lawrence has created a specially commissioned lithograph (right).

A signed, numbered edition of the work, available as of September 1, will be priced at $1,200 for Resident Associates, $1,800 for nonmembers. Proceeds will help support RAP's Discover Graphics program. For information, call 357-3217.

National Museum of Natural History
A Jeweler's Art: Masterpieces from Van Cleef & Arpels (through November 30) The famed company's creations, 1920s through '50s. See *Highlights continued*, page 164.
A Journey through Chinese Hell: Hell Scrolls of Taiwan (September 6-December 28) Scrolls depict the courts of hell.
Life in the Ancient Seas A major new installation, showcasing 2,000 fossils and featuring a diorama of a 230-million-year-old reef.

Renwick Gallery
Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art (through November 25) Whimsical, offbeat creations by 12 artisans.
Four Contemporary Calligraphers (through January 1) Twenty-two English, Chinese, Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Yokohama: Prints from Nineteenth-Century Japan (through September 9) Eighty-five color woodblock prints.
The Noble Path: Buddhist Art of South Asia and Tibet (through September) More than 100 objects reflecting the changing imagery of Buddhism.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
Color, Light, Surface: Contemporary Fabrics (through September 23) Textiles crafted during the past decade.

National Museum of American History
Contrasts: Forty Years of Change and Continuity in Puerto Rico, Photographs by Jack Delano/Contrasts: Fotografías de Jack Delano (September 15-October 15) A bilingual SITES exhibition showcasing works of the distinguished photographer.

On the Way, Jacob Lawrence's 12-color lithograph, depicts lively street scene.

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Information Age: People, Information and Technology A new installation traces the history of information technology. *From Parlor to Politics: Women & Reform in America, 1890-1925* (through June 1991) A look at the outstanding activists of the early 20th century.

Anacostia Museum
Whose Art Is It, Anyway? (through September 16) A series of photographs, depicting sculptures and murals installed in public spaces, exhibited in conjunction with various workshops.

National Museum of African Art
Royal Benin Art Creations from court artisans, 15th through 19th centuries. *Permanent Collection* More than 100 masterworks from sub-Saharan Africa.

National Museum of American Art
Visual Poetry: The Drawings of Joseph Stella (September 7-November 12) Sixty of the painter's drawings, collages. *Made With Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection* September 22-January 21) Nearly 200 works from one of NMAA's most significant acquisitions.

National Portrait Gallery
The Five of Hearts (through November 4) Portraits of a 19th-century circle of friends, including Henry Adams. *Working for* Time: *The Covers of Robert Vickrey* (through November 4) Portraits of subjects from Nelson Rockefeller to John Updike.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Bay Area Figurative Art, 1950-1965 (through September 9) More than 60 paintings by artists from Richard Diebenkorn to David Park.

National Air and Space Museum
Trust But Verify / Do Veri, No Pro Veri A new exhibition explains the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. See *Around the Mall*, page 20. *Drawings and Things by Rowland Emmett* (through January 2) Humorous look at airplanes, spacecraft.

Exhibition catalogs

Catalogs available currently include:
Visual Poetry: The Drawings of Joseph Stella ($24.95, paper; $45, cloth)
Puerto Rico Mio: Four Decades of Change ($24.95, paper)

To order, send check or money order to Museum Shops, 3301 75th Avenue, Landover, Maryland 20785. Include 15 percent of total purchase to cover postage and handling (minimum, $1.75).

Smithsonian on the air

Radio Smithsonian: Features include stories on Voyager 2, the effect of dam building on native Americans, and jazz arranger Bill Kirchner.
Here at the Smithsonian: Three-minute TV spots take you behind the scenes.
To find out which stations in your area carry these radio and TV programs, write: Office of Telecommunications, MAH Room BB40, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Smithsonian National Associates

The Program hosts events in Greenwich, Connecticut, September 21-23; Charlotte and Gastonia, North Carolina, September 21-23; and Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, September 27-30.
For further information, write or call U.S. and International Events Program, 490 L'Enfant Plaza S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560, (202) 287-3210.

Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or to obtain fee and ticket information, call 357-3030.
Infinite Illusions Imagery (September 8-16; 10 A.M.-9:30 P.M.) Nine-day, state-of-the-art computer graphics symposium.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here are some September exhibits:
Des Moines, Iowa (September 15-October 28) *Badges of Pride: Symbols and Images of American Labor*, State Historical Society of Iowa.
Gadsden, Alabama (September 8-October 21) *Superman: Many Lives, Many Worlds*, Center for Cultural Art.
Windsor Locks, Connecticut (September 22-October 21) *Steichen and His Men: A Photographic Portrait of World War II*, New England Air Museum.

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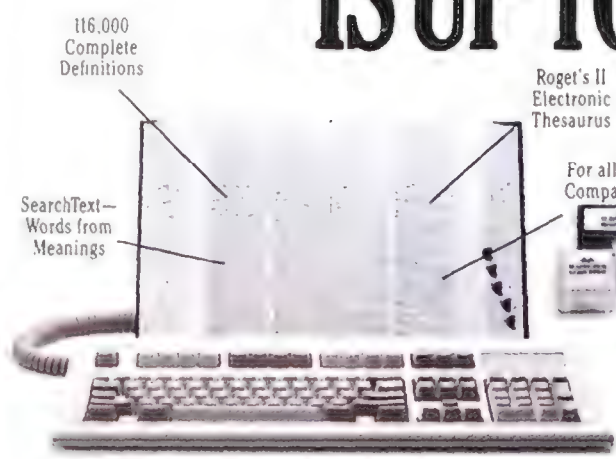
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The jeweler's alluring art

As a schoolboy in the 1880s, Alfred Van Cleef, the son of a Parisian gem cutter, spent his days in artistic doodling, covering his notebook pages with sketches of jewelry. He found his life's work when he established a family business with his brothers-in-law, Charles and Julien Arpels, in 1906.

The opening of Van Cleef & Arpels, in palatial quarters at 22 Place Vendôme, initiated a legendary enterprise in jewelry design. The firm relied on a studio of artisans—designers and draftsmen, gem cutters and goldsmiths—to create the pieces coveted by affluent customers.

By the 1920s, maharanis and marquesses flocked to the Paris shop or to new branches on the Riviera. The clientele were eager to purchase the brooches and tiaras, necklaces and earrings that came to typify the firm's exquisite productions. The tradition endured: later patrons included everyone from the Duchess of Windsor to Maria Callas and Elizabeth Taylor.

A selection of the firm's signature creations forms the centerpiece of "A Jeweler's Art: Masterpieces from Van Cleef & Arpels," in the Hall of Gems and Minerals at the National Museum of Natural History through November 30. The show travels to open at the Honolulu Academy of Arts on January 16, 1991.
Kathleen M. Burke

Peony clip, 1936, crafted of rubies and diamonds, features invisible setting.

Gold-and-diamond zipper necklace is a study in 1950s playful elegance.

Dancing ballerina clips, set in diamonds with rubies, emeralds, date from 1940s.

Birds-on-a-branch pin, 1945, is made of cabochon rubies, sapphires, diamonds.

Medieval Flemish tapestry inspired 1926 vanity case inlaid with hunting scene.

Humane Research Benefits Mankind *and* Animals.

Animal protection organizations have existed in the United States for more than 100 years. Not until 1953 did people become interested in laboratory animals. Then, a grass-roots movement called Working for Animals used in Research, Drugs, and Surgery (WARDS) began. Its purpose was to reduce the suffering of animals used in research. WARDS' pioneering efforts helped generate the Animal Welfare Act of 1966.

WARDS does not deny the necessity of using animals for medical experimentation in safeguarding human life. We realize that many people and animals would not be alive and healthy today were it not for medical science. WARDS believes that badly treated animals produce poor research.

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NEW Chesapeake Birds *October 6-13*

NEW California's Channel Islands *October 8-13 or 15-20*

NEW Historic Houses of North Carolina *October 9-17* New Bern, Edenton and the Outer Banks.

Bryce, Zion and the North Rim *October 9-19*

Grand Canyon Weekend *October 11-14*

NEW Sapelo (Georgia) *October 11-15 or March 28-April 1* Explore this barrier island near Savannah.

New York City *November 15-18* Includes private collections and a Broadway show.

Christmas at the Smithsonian *December 13-16*

Christmas in Santa Fe *December 20-27*

Florida Everglades *January 22-30* Canoe the Ten Thousand Islands.

Birds of South Texas *February 16-23* Learn birding techniques at wildlife refuges.

Baja Whale Watch *February 23-March 3* Explore islands from San Diego to San Ignacio Lagoon.

Yellowstone in Winter *February 24-March 3* History, ecology and cross-country skiing.

Hawaii Camping *March 16-30* Hike the islands of Kauai, Molokai, Maui and Hawaii.

Charleston-Savannah *March 19-26* Historic homes and gardens.

New Orleans-Natchez *April 7-14* History and culture.

New Orleans *April 7-14*

Sojourn in Sedona *April 18-25* Arizona natural history and art.

Big Bend (Texas) *April 18-27*

Foreign Study Tours

Rhône Cruise *September 18-October 2* Provence, Burgundy, Paris.

NEW Modern Masters in the South of France *September 30-October 10*

Cotswold Walks *October 4-16*

NEW Castles and Gardens of Czechoslovakia and Hungary *October 5-19*

Turkey and Greece *October 10-23* Cruise aboard the tall ship *Sea Cloud*.

NEW Splendors of South China Seas *October 11-31* Hong Kong, Thailand, Java, Bali.

Australia *October 13-30*

Folk Art and Celebrations of Colonial Mexico *October 27-November 8*

NEW Bermuda *November 8-12 or February 21-25* Enjoy the island's cultural heritage.

Interludes *November-April* Uncrowded museums, cultural events and leisurely exploration in London, Venice, Munich, Prague, Paris, Lisbon, Vienna, Hong Kong, Kyoto.

Christmas in Europe York and Edinburgh, Canterbury or Switzerland.

Virgin Islands Christmas Cruise *December 22-29* Aboard the *Nantucket Clipper*.

South America Adventure *January 3-23* Cruise around Cape Horn on the *Seabourn Pride*.

India Wildlife *January 13-February 7*

Yucatán Adventure *January 16-28*

USSR Performing Arts *January 18-31* Includes the Bolshoi and Kirov theaters.

Kenya-Tanzania *January 24-February 10*

Far East Adventure *February 6-26* Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Guatemala *February 13-25* Explore monumental Mayan ruins.

Red Sea Cruise *February 17-March 2*

Belize Cruise *February 19-March 5* Cozumel to Panama.

Indonesia Cruise *February 19-March 7*

St. Kitts *February 28-March 9* Enjoy the Caribbean's Lesser Antilles.

Countryside Tours *February-September* Relaxing sojourns in Mexico, Greece, Italy, France, England, Switzerland, Austria, Wales and Germany.

NEW Reindeer Safari (Finland) *February 24-March 5*

NEW Indian Ocean Cruise *March 1-19* For Smithsonian Contributing Members.

Australia-New Zealand *March 1-21*

Belize Adventure *March 2-9*

Treasures of Mogul India *March 5-25*

Alpine Snow Train (Switzerland) *March 7-19*

Sea of Cortés *March 13-20* Cruise Mexico's Gulf of California.

Budapest Music Festival *March 14-25*

Morocco *April 13-27*

USSR and Central Asia *April 14-27*

Costa Rica *April 18-May 3*

Nile Cruise *April 19-May 5*

British Theater *April 19-29*

NEW North Africa Cruise *April 19-May 1*

Galápagos Islands *April 21-May 2*

NEW Dutch-Belgian Cruise *April 21-May 6*

Gardens of Northern Italy *April 23-May 4*

Brazil-Argentina *May 1-15*

NEW Mozart and His World (Austria and Czechoslovakia) *May 8-19*

Smithsonian Seminars

Explore diverse topics in depth with top scholars during classroom study and tours.

Highlights of Austrian Civilization *October 6-17* Salzburg and Vienna.

NEW American Folk Art *October 9-12* Washington, D.C. Visit museum exhibitions and private collections.

Write to Smithsonian National Associate Program, Washington, DC 20560 or call (202) 357-4700 for tour and seminar brochures,

SMITHSONIAN-STYLE

NEW **Chesapeake Bay Ecology** *October 14-18* Annapolis. Learn at the Smithsonian's Environmental Research Center.

The Art and Craft of Creative Writing *October 14-18* Annapolis. Stay at a historic inn. Study and write with SMITHSONIAN columnist Edwards Park.

Santa Fe *October 28-November 2* Explore Southwestern art, archaeology or literature.

Egypt *November 16-December 1* Classes in Cairo; cruise on the Nile.

NEW **Eastern Europe-USSR Update** *November 27-30* Washington, D.C. Journalists Hedrick Smith and Peter Jennings discuss political and cultural changes.

NEW **The Venetian Tradition** *January 15-18* Washington, D.C. See Titian and Van Dyck exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art. Enjoy lectures by William Kloss.

American Antique Furniture *January 28-31* Washington, D.C. Trace three centuries of fine furniture. Visit historic homes and Delaware's Winterthur Museum.

Exploring the Sea *February 3-7* Fort Pierce, Florida. Study marine biology with Smithsonian scientists.

NEW **Story into Art: Exploring Mythology and Visual Images** *February 11-15* Washington, D.C.

NEW **Broadcast Journalism** *March 10-15* Washington, D.C.

Research Expeditions

Contribute your talent and financial resources to Smithsonian research. Work with curators in Washington, D.C. or at field sites worldwide.

Orofino, Idaho *September 11-21* Record Lumberjack Days festivities.

Washington, D.C. *October 28-November 3* Learn about electronic photography as you transfer still photographs to videodisks.

Costa Rica *April 6-18 or July 6-18* Monitor geologic activity and collect plant specimens at an active volcano site.

NEW **Calvert Cliffs, Maryland** *May 2-11* Collect fossils along the Chesapeake.

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By Barbara Kingsolver

After a finger workout, it's great pumping iron

The baby-sitter may suspect I'm having an affair. I dash in to pick up my daughter after "work" with my cheeks flushed, my heart pounding, my hair damp from a quick shower. I'm loath to admit where I've really been for the past hour. But it's time to come clean.

I've joined a health club.

I go downtown and sweat with the masses. I ride a bike that goes nowhere at the rate of 500 calories per hour. I even pump a little iron. I can't deny the place is a lekking ground: guys stalk around the weight room like prairie chickens, nervously eyeing one another's pectorals. Over by the abdominal machines I've heard some of the frankest pickup lines since eighth grade ("You've got real defined deltoids for a girl"). A truck that is perpetually parked out front has vanity plates that read: LFT WTS. Another one, PRSS 350, I didn't even recognize as a vanity plate until I understood the prestige of pressing 350 pounds.

I personally couldn't bench-press a fully loaded steam iron. I don't wish to lose weight, nor to meet the young Adonis who admires my (dubiously defined) deltoids. I am a happily mated, skinny weakling. Except for the happily mated part, that's what I've been since birth. In polite terminology, I'm cerebral; the muscles between my ears are what I get by on. The last great body in my family was my grandfather Henry. He wore muscle shirts in the days when they were known as BVD's, and his bronze tan stopped midbiceps. He got those biceps by hauling floor joists and hammering up roof beams every day of his adult life including his last. How he'd guffaw to see a roomful of nearly naked bankers and attorneys, pale as plucked geese, heads down, eyes fixed on a horizon beyond the watercooler, pedaling hell-for-leather on bolted-down bicycles. I expect he'd offer us all a job. If we'd pay our $30 a month to *him*, we could come out to the construction site and run up and down ladders to bring him nails. That's why I'm a little embarrassed about all this. I'm afraid I share his opinion of unproductive sweat.

Actually, he'd be more amazed than scornful. His idea of fun was watching Ed Sullivan on TV or snoozing in a recliner, or both. Why work like a maniac on your day off? To keep your heart and lungs in shape. Of course. But I haven't noticed any vanity plates that say GD LNGS. The operative word here is vanity.

Standards of beauty in every era are things that advertise, usually falsely, "I'm rich and I don't have to work." How could you possibly be a useful farmhand, or even an efficient clerk-typist, if you have long, painted fingernails? Four-inch high heels, like the bound feet of Chinese aristocrats, suggest that you don't have to do *anything* efficiently, except maybe lie around and eat bonbons. (And I'll point out here that *men* as well as women wore the first high heels in Europe.) In cultures where food is scarce, beauty is three-inches-of-subcutaneous-fat deep. Here and now, jobs are sedentary and calories are cheap, but time to work them off is very dear.

As a writer I could do my job fine with no deltoids at all, or biceps or triceps, so long as you left me those vermicelli-size muscles that lift the fingers to the keyboard (my vermicellis are *very* well defined). So when I've writ my piece, off I merrily go to build a body that says I don't really have a finan obligation to sit here in video-disp terminal bondage.

Well, yes. But to tell you the tr the leisure body, even the GD LN isn't what I'm after here. What I c is to be *strong*. In childhood, t sports were my most reliable sourc humiliation. I've been knocked brea less to the ground by softballs, bas balls, volleyballs, and once durin wildly out-of-hand game of Red Ro a sneaker. In every case I knew teammates were counting on me fo volley or a double play or, anyh something more than clutching stomach and rolling upon the grass. the time I reached junior high I was even the last one picked anymore. slunk away long before they got to t bottom of the barrel.

Even now, the great conflagration my marriage is that my beloved scre the mustard and pickle jar lids back so tightly *I can't get them open*! (H thinks he's just closing them.) Sure, can use a pipe wrench, but it's emba rassing. Once when he was out of tow the front gate got stuck, and I coul leave home only by clambering furtive through the bougainvilleas and over th garden wall. Naturally, when he an nounced "Hi, honey, I'm home!" he ha no idea he'd just casually pushed ope the Berlin Wall.

My inspiration at the health club is woman firefighter who could knoc down my garden wall with a karat chop. I covet her triceps. Realistically though, I know I was born to be "before" picture. I won't be seen driving around with plates that boast PRSS 350.

Maybe: OPN JRS.

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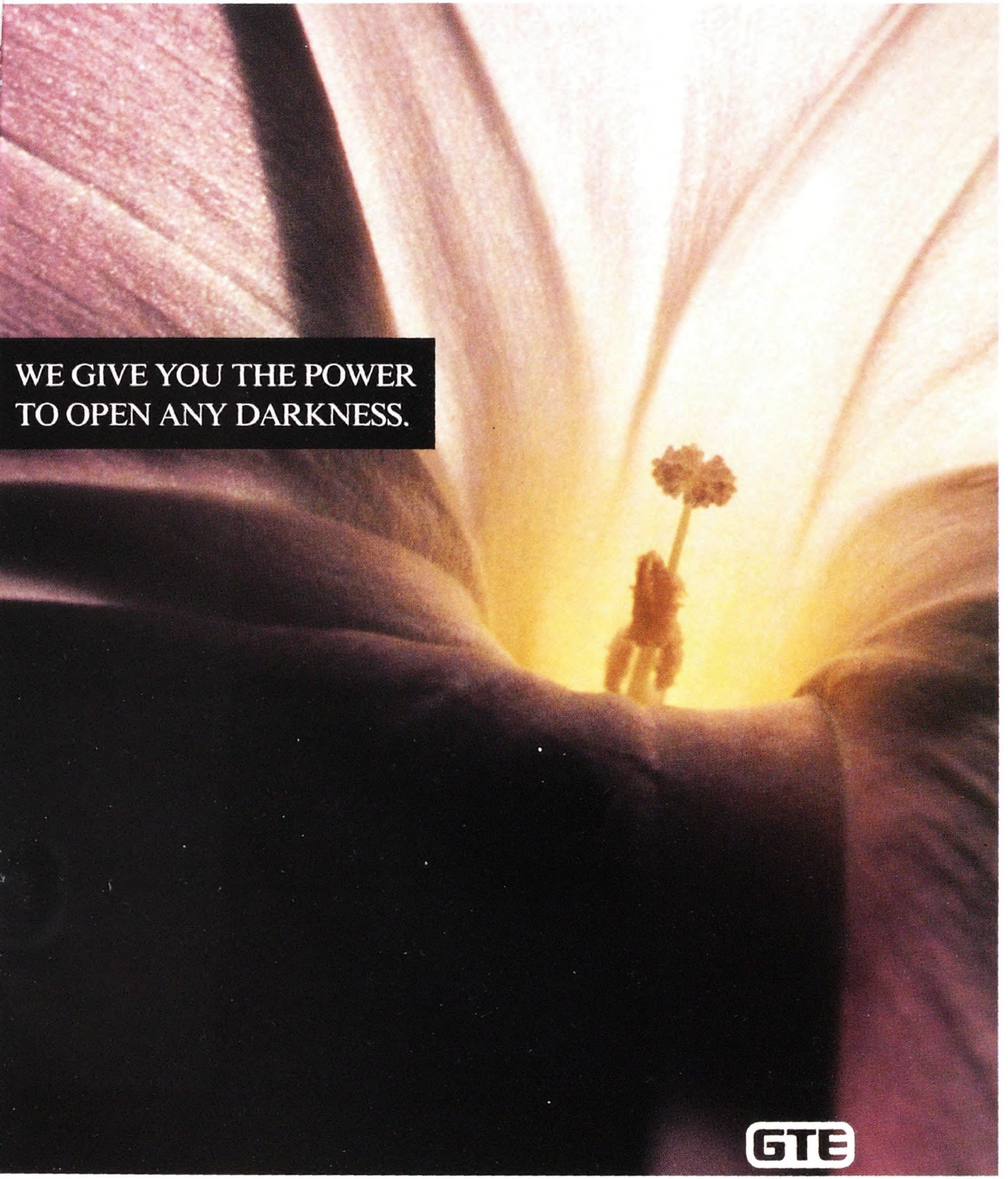

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